

*Co. 15 20
73 40 59*

A *123/3*

Practical Discourse UPON CHARITY,

In its several Branches :

And of the Reasonableness
and *Useful Nature* of this Great
CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

By EDWARD PELLING, D.D.
*Chaplain in Ordinary to Their
Majesties, and Rector of Petworth
in Sussex.*

LONDON,
Printed by E. J. for W. Crooke at the Green-
Dragon without Temple-Bar, 1693.



2504:09

THE CONTENTS.

THE Introduction.	Page 1.
<i>The Nature of Christian Charity, what it is, and how it differs from Justice.</i>	6
<i>The Benefit that comes to ones Mind by a Charitable Temper.</i>	25
<i>The Resemblance it bears to the Nature of God.</i>	34
<i>How it serves to answer the Great Ends of the New Covenant.</i>	47
<i>How it fits and prepares us for an Happy State hereafter.</i>	61
<i>How we are to express our Charity.</i>	75
<i>Several ways of expressing it, according to the Characters given of Charity by St. Paul.</i>	76
<i>Charity must be express'd by not being Angry on a sudden.</i>	79
<i>Charity must be express'd by moderating Anger.</i>	82
<i>Directions for the Government of this Passion.</i>	92
<i>We must express our Charity by all manner of Kindness, p.104. To another's Soul, p.111. To his outward Wants, p.112. And to his Credit also,</i>	p. 116
<i>Charity forbids us to be Envious; and why.</i>	119
<i>Charity forbids us to be Precipitant and Rash.</i>	128
<i>Directions to keep us from being Rash.</i>	131
<i>We</i>	

The Contents.

<i>We must express our Charity by our Humility, and why.</i>	Page 134
<i>'Tis inconsistent with Charity to do any Thing that is Foul, or Indecent.</i>	145
<i>We must express our Charity by seeking the Publick Good, p. 157. Especially Peace, p. 162</i>	
<i>Charity forbids us to be Suspicious and Jealous-headed.</i>	178
<i>Charity forbids us to Rejoyce at other Men's Sins, p. 188. And at other Men's Calamities, p. 194. Directions as to this, p. 195</i>	
<i>We must express our Charity by our Zeal for the Prosperity of true Religion, p. 200. Directions as to this,</i>	p. 203
<i>We must expsess our Charity by concealing other People's Faults, p. 209. And why, p. 212. Directions,</i>	p. 219
<i>We must express our Charity by Believing the best of others in all Doubtful Cases, p. 224. Directions as to this,</i>	p. 228
<i>Charity requires us to Hope well of others, especially as to their future State,</i>	234
<i>Christian Charity must be express'd by Patience in all Cases, p. 247. By Patience in a Suffering Condition, p. 250. And in case of Difference in Matters of Opinion, p. 261</i>	
<i>The Conclusion.</i>	275

A
Practical Discourse
UPON
CHARITY;

THAT infinitely Wise
and Beneficent Being
that made the World,
to communicate him-
self to his Creatures, and to make
them Partakers of his Goodness,
hath given such Laws of Virtue
to Mankind, as serve, not only
to prepare us for the endless Fel-
icities of another Life, but also to
make

2 *A Practical Discourse*

make us in a great measure happy in this. For those Virtues are Copies of God himself, Transcripts of his own most Blessed Nature; and therefore they must necessarily tend to make us happy, because God himself is happy in them. God's Happiness consisteth in the admirable Perfections of his Nature; and the higher we rise in these Perfections, the greater degrees of Happiness we must needs attain to, because we approach the nearer unto God, in the resemblance of whom the true and solid Happiness of Mankind doth consist, though the corrupt part of the World doth evermore place it in other Things.

Those Virtues I now speak of are the Divine Perfections which are the Rule of God's Actions towards Mankind: As, the Purity and

and Holiness of his Nature ; by means whereof he hateth all manner of Iniquity ; his Essential Veracity, by reason whereof he cannot lye ; his Faithfulness in the performance of all his Promises, upon which account he is emphatically called, *The faithful God, Deut. 7. 9.* His Patience and Long-suffering towards the greatest Criminals, *not willing that any should perish* ; the exact Rectitude of his Will, by means whereof he offers not the least Injury to any part of the Creation, but is Righteous and Just in all his Proceedings : But above all his infinite Compassion, (a God *full of Compassion* he is called, *Psal. 86. 15.*) by virtue whereof he is Gracious, Merciful, slow to Anger, and plenteous in Goodness. These Perfections the ever-blessed God communicates

4 *A Practical Discourse*

to Mankind, according to their Capacities ; and in the exercise of these Virtues doth our true Happiness consist. It is not Riches or Greatness, or any Worldly Enjoyments, that make our Minds or our Lives happy : Then are we happy indeed, when we are holy as God is Holy ; when we are Sincere and Upright, Constant, Patient and Just as God is ; and above all, when our *Mercy rejoiceth over Justice*, as God's doth ; when we put on Bowels of Mercy ; when we are Kind, and Good, and Tender-hearted towards one another ; when we forbear one another, and forgive one another ; in short, when we love one another, as God himself loves us all. This is our greatest Perfection : a Perfection recommended to us in the Scripture under singular Characters ;

raetters; above Faith, or Hope, or any other Grace: And in the practice of this Virtue our truest Happiness must needs consist, because it carrieth the greatest Resemblance of the Divine Nature. *God is Love*, saith the Apostle, *1 John 4. 8.* that is, the Perfection of Love, Goodness, and Charity is in him.

In discoursing upon this Subject, *Charity*, as it relates to Mankind, it will be necessary,

1. *First*, To explain the true Nature of it.
2. To consider the Motives which serve to make it Practical.
3. To shew the Way and Manner, after which it is to be express'd.

6 *A Practical Discourse*

I. As to the Nature of *Charity*: It is such a Principle of Kindness and Benevolence, as doth dispose us to do others all the good we can, over and above that which is their due by the Laws of Common Justice. This is to be noted carefully, that we may understand the difference between *Justice* properly so called, and true *Christian Charity*.

The Office of *Justice* is to do those Things which a Man hath a Civil Right unto; Things which he can claim and challenge; Things which cannot be denied him without manifest Wrong and Injury. Now this, even Irreligious and Hard-hearted People are capable of doing; nor is this always

always a Virtue, because it proceedeth many times not from Choice, but Necessity. Charity is a Tenderness and Goodness of Mind, which constrains us to do more than what Humane Laws oblige us to. 'Tis a Virtue that stirs the Bowels, that moveth and worketh upon the Affections, that extends our Compassion, and enlarges our Hearts beyond the common Limits: A Virtue that inclineth us to be Benevolent unto all Men; to wish them all the Good their condition calls for; to be Supplicants for it on their behalf at the Throne of Grace; to aid and assist them towards the obtaining of it; and for the Love of God and for Religion-sake to help them, not only to those Things which are really due from Us, but to those Things also which

8. *A Practical Discourse*

are necessary, fitting, and proper for *Them*, tho' they be not Debts in a strict Sense and Construction. In a word, it is a Generosity of Temper, that is apt to suit it self to the condition of others, according to the moving Nature of their present Circumstances.

The Rule of Righteousness is, *To render every Man his own*; But this may be without Charity; and therefore this alone is beneath the Generous and Noble Disposition of a Christian; it doth not come up to the perfect Law of Christ: Charity, though it hath a mixture of Justice in it, yet it is a great deal more: and that it may be compleat, as it should be, these two Qualifications are very necessary.

First,

First, That it be of the same Nature with that Affection which we have for our selves.

Secondly, That it resemble that great Love which the Lord Jesus express'd for us all.

First, Our Charity to others must be of the same *Nature* with the Affection we have for our selves. This is the true Rule of Charity, especially as it is heightned and improved by the Christian Religion, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*; that is, with the same good natur'd and kind Affection, though it may be not in the same Measure and Degree.

There is indeed a sort of Self-love that is sinful, an Affection that begins and ends at home too; when a Man is for pleasing himself

self only, when he seeks his own only; when he makes himself the sole end of all his Actions; and would fain engross to himself all that is good and desirable in this World, begrudging his Neighbour any considerable Share or Proportion of it. Now this is so far from being a Rule of Charity, that there is nothing of Charity in it; nothing more opposite to the true Spirit of Charity, than such a selfish Temper.

But there is too an innocent kind of Self-love, which necessarily riseth out of a Natural Principle of Self-preservation; when a Man, notwithstanding the greatness and largeness of his Mind, doth consult the Good of others so, as not to neglect his own, but takes a due Care of himself in the first place. This Natural Affection

fection every one hath for himself; and it is attended inseparably with these two Properties;

First, Every one loves himself *Unfeignedly* and *Sincerely*. To be sure, there is no Flattery, no Pretence, no Compliment in this case. Our Affections may be believ'd and trusted, when they speak favourably on our own side; for *no Man ever yet hated his own flesh*: We cannot but wish our selves well, and those Wishes always come from our very Hearts. And according to this Rule the Christian Law obligeth us to measure out our Charity to others: It must be *Love without dissimulation*, Rom. 12. 9. *Love unfeigned*, 2 Cor. 6. 6. *Love, not in word, or in tongue only, but in deed, and in truth*, Jam. 3. 18. Under colour of

12 *A Practical Discourse*

of Affection to contrive or help one anothers Misfortunes, is like the Charity of him, who betrayed the Lord Jesus with a Kiss. People are not wont to be Traytors to themselves after such a manner : Though in the Consequence and Event they many times prove their own Enemies, and the worst Enemies they have ; yet no Man betrays himself with *Judas* his *Purpose* ; the Intention on which we all act is still levelled at that which we believe or suppose to be good for us : And this is properly to love our Neighbour *as ones self* ; to be as really solicitous for his Welfare in all respects, as for ones own ; to have the same reality and sincerity of Purpose ; to be influenced and animated with the same quality and truth of Affection, though
the

the Case may admit of a difference as to proportion.

Secondly, Another Property that attends all innocent Love of our self is, that it is *firm* and *constant*. Because it flows from an innate Principle of Self-preservation, it must of necessity hold and continue as long as Nature it self lasteth; nor can any Circumstances, Events, or Disappointments alter any Man's Temper so, as to render him fickle and unsteady to himself; much less dissolve the strict Band which ties his own Heart to him, faster than that which was between the Souls of *Jonathan* and *David*. Why thus too must *Brotherly Love* *continue*, Hebr. 13. 1. because the Reasons of Charity are ever the same, *viz.* The Obedience we
owe

14 *A Practical Discourse*

owe to the Law of God, and the common Wants among Mankind, which always call for our mutual Pity and Assistance ; there is a constant necessity for our Minds to be always benevolently and tenderly disposed. And though Resentments may and oftentimes do unavoidably happen, by reason of the Ignorances of some, the Passions of others, and the Hereditary Infirmities of us all ; yet no Provocations or Injuries must affect Men so, as to harden their Spirits, or fill their Bowels with Gall and Wormwood : Since the fix'd Rule is, that we must *Love our Neighbours as our selves*, we are no more permitted to be weary of our Charity to other Men, than we permit our selves to be weary of doing good to our own Souls.

But

But there is a higher and nobler Rule of Charity yet ; and that is, to *Love one another, as the Lord Jesus himself hath loved us.* Because the Love even of ones self may be defective, imperfect, and mixed with some Alloy ; therefore the great Lover of all our Souls hath made his own Charity to be the Standard and Measure of ours. Upon which account he calls it, *A new Commandment : A New Commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye love one another, John 13. 34.* In respect of the Matter of it, the Law of Mutual Charity is an old one ; for it hath been written in the Hearts of Men from the beginning, and it was expressly given to the Jews, *Lev. 19. 18.* It is a New Commandment in respect of that

16 *A Practical Discourse*

that High and Eminent Degree, to which our Blessed Saviour hath raised it. Men's Charity now must bear a Resemblance of his; Love one another *as I have loved you*: This is the thing which makes it a *New Commandment* indeed.

The Scripture speaks of three Things especially, which were peculiarly remarkable in the Love of Christ.

1. That he extended his Love to open and declared Enemies. The *Old Commandment* which required the Jews to Love their Neighbour as themselves, permitted them to Hate an Enemy; nay, in some cases bound them to express all manner of Hostility against such as were Aliens to the Faith, and to the Commonwealth of

of *Israel*; But saith the Apostle, God commended his Love towards us, in that while we were yet *Sinners*, Christ died for us; and when we were *Enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, *Rom. 5. 8, 10.* And again, when we were *alienated*, and *Enemies* in our Minds by wicked Works, *Col. 1. 21.* That is, this was a stupendous, a most amazing Expression of Christ's Love, that he undertook the great Work of Redeeming a profligate World, wretched Creatures that had bid God defiance, that were Haters of all that is Good and Holy, and thereby had brought themselves into a lost and damnable condition: And yet this he did voluntarily, and of his own accord, when there was nothing in the World to move him to it

C. but

but his own infinite Compassion,
and Tenderness only.

2. The second thing that was Peculiar and New in the Love of Christ, was, that he was beforehand with his Enemies in these Expressions of his Goodness to them. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*, John 15. 16. And, *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*, 1 John 4. 10. Meaning, that this is a clear and astonishing demonstration of his Goodness, that in transacting the mysterious business of Reconciliation, he was pleased to have the first hand; that he prevented us with his own early Offers; and surprised us with Terms of Peace and Happiness, when no such thing was either desired, or expected, or so

so much as thought of by the World.

But Thirdly, That which was most peculiar of all, most eminent and wonderful in the Love of Christ, was his Dying for his Enemies: There is not in the *Old Commandment* a Syllable of any Obligations to such an high degree of Charity as this is, of laying down their Lives, no not for their Brethren. And one Reason of it is, because length of Days, and Temporal Felicity was the great Reward, that was plainly and expressly promised under the Law to such as kept it: And therefore they were not bound by any Principle of pure Charity, to part, for any Man's sake, with that, which was the greatest Blessing the Law could give them. So that Christ's

C 2 dying

20 *A Practical Discourse*

dying as he did, *the Just, for the Unjust*; was the sublimest act of Love that could be; for greater Love than this hath no Man, that a Man *lay down his Life for his Friends*, John 15. 13. Only our Saviour's own Charity was far greater, in laying down his most precious Life even for his Enemies.

His Commandment therefore, that we should love one another *as he himself hath loved us*, is altogether a new one, such Charity was never before required of the World; such Charity was never heard of before: Charity of such a vast height and measure was quite a new thing. Scarcely for *a Righteous Man will any one die*; saith the Apostle: *Though peradventure for a good Man some would even dare to die*. Yet God commended

mended his Love towards us, (it was infinitely beyond all the Charity that ever had been among Men) *in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. 5.7,8.*

By what hath been thus briefly spoken, we may now easily discern the true and genuine Nature of that Charity, which is properly called Christian: It is such a benevolent and tender disposition of Soul as inclines us to do, not those Things only which the Laws of Common Justice require us to do, but moreover all such kind and obliging Offices as becomes Creatures of the most compassionate Hearts, and God-like Tempers: To be affected with the sense of other Men's Wants, as well as our own; to pity them as our selves; to wish and promote their Good with

C 3 such

22 *A Practical Discourse*

such unfeigned Desires, and un-
wearied Endeavours, as if our
own Welfare were concern'd :
And because the Lord Jesus
vouchsafed to express a common
Love to us all, we are to follow
his most blessed Steps, in express-
sing our Charity to Mankind, as
long as we live in the World ; to
Bless and Pray for, and to do
good to our very Enemies ; to
offer them Terms of Accommo-
dation ; to give them Testimo-
nies of a Reconcileable Temper ;
to encourage and provoke them
to be Reconciled by our own
Example ; by shewing them our
own Bowels, and by letting them
see how kind, humble, meek,
long-suffering, and patient we our
selves are ; and how ready to for-
give them. Briefly to have such
ardent Affections unto all Men,
and

and especially to those who are of the Household of Faith, as to serve them willingly, not only with our Wishes, and Labours, and Substance, but (when need requires) with our very Lives also. Tho' Life be so dear a matter, that *Skin after Skin, and all that a Man hath he will give for it*; yet upon great Occasions, and in pressing Circumstances, and for weighty and noble Ends, to be ready as the Lord Jesus was to die for others, after all other Services done for them; this is to have that fervent, and perfect, and true Charity, which the Christian Religion recommendeth to us *above all Things.*

2. The Quality and Extent of Christian Charity being thus sum-

C 4 marly

24 *A Practical Discourse*

marily Explain'd, I proceed now in the second place, to consider those Motives and Reasons which serve to make it Practical.

Now to digest this Matter into as clear a Method, and under as few Heads as may be, I shall propose these four Things in general to be considered.

1. What great Good a Charitable Temper doth to a Man's own Mind.
2. How effectually it helps us to answер the Ends of the *New Covenant*.
3. How near it brings us unto God even in this World.
4. How it prepares and fits us for the Everlasting Happiness of another.

I. What

I. What great Good a Charitable Temper doth to a Man's own Mind ; Though a *Crown* of Righteousness (a Glorious and Perfect Reward) be laid up and reserved for us against the Day of Judgment ; yet all Virtue brings us something of a present Reward. As it cleanseth the Spirit from the Corruptions of the World, and from the Filthiness of the Flesh, so it replenisheth the Soul with the greatest Satisfaction and Pleasure ; and by these means, as well the Holiness, as the Joy of a future State, beginneth here. Now of those Graces which at once *purifie*, and *delight* the Mind, a Spirit of Charity is One, and perhaps the Greatest. It rids the Soul of several Vices which affect the Conscience

26 *A Practical Discourse*

ence with the greatest Guilt, and therefore must of consequence bring the greatest Plague ; Vices which Crucifie the very Soul, and make every one his worst Tormentor ; as Pride, Envy, Malice, and such like. These are peculiarly called the Sins of the very Devil ; and therefore it is fit they should carry a Hell with them. It is impossible for such scurvy Qualities, to reign in a Breast where a Charitable Heart lies. Kind Spirits are not wont to be **Haughty, Imperious, and Tyranical** ; especially towards those they really love : Much less are they wont to be griev'd, and afflicted at their Prosperity ; or to seek their Hurt. Such Vices are altogether inconsistent with Charity ; and they always grow out of ill-nature, like Nettles out of a

Dung.

Dunghil ; and methinks Men should shun them the rather, because they always sting the very Mind that is their Nursery. Hearts that are the proper and kindly Soyl of Virtue, are never sensible of this Smart ; because they are free from the Causes of it ; and were the insides of Men to be throughly discovered, I am confident it would be found, that none are so easie and quiet within, so satisfied in their Minds, as those that have generous Affections for all Mankind : If in such Breasts there be any Dissatisfactions, it is because their kind Endeavours are not successful ; or else because they are not able to do all the Good they would. Uncharitable Wretches know not the Pleasure of doing Good ; nor what Peace and Complacency returns

turns into ones Bosom by every Charitable Action ; nay sometimes by a bare Charitable Purpose and Design, when some cross Accident hinders the Execution of it. Indeed, these inward Comforts cannot be sensibly known, but by Experience ; and therefore Arguments of this kind may seem very feeble and impertinent to those who love themselves only, and delight themselves in ways of Frowardness.

Yet the most unexperienc'd People may observe very much to this purpose, from two palpable Instances we find in the Holy Scripture ; the one in *Haman*, the other in *St. Paul* : Setting aside the Story of *Joseph's* Advance-
ment, we meet not with such an Account as that of *Haman* ; of his Riches ; of his Honour, and
of

of his great Power, as well over *Ahasuerus* himself, as over all his Subjects. And yet his Pride, Envy, and Malice (the Vices I mention'd before) over-top't, and bore down all this Greatness: One Thing he wanted still, and that was the Compliment of *Mordecai's* Knee; and for want of that, nothing would satisfie him but the Destruction of poor *Mordecai* himself, and all the Jews; Rancour and Revenge in the highest degree, and that which argued Pains, Griefs, Agonies, and Tortures in his Mind, of the highest degree too. So that though the miserable Wretch boasted of his Wealth, Glory, and Authority over all the King's Princes; yet, said he, *all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate, Esth.5.13.*

Strange

30 *A Practical Discourse*

Strange Torment surely, that Nothing could allay ; that all his Splendor was nothing in comparison of ; that neither the Gallows he had provided for *Mordecai* was any thing, if compared with the Rack in his own Breast.

A Spirit of Charity would have saved him all that expensive Vexation, which his ill Nature put him to, amidst all his Honours : Half that Charitable Temper, which was such a great Blessing to St. *Paul* amidst all his Troubles ; no meer Man ever loved the Souls of People more than he : None was ever more Compassionate towards a needy World. None that fled over Land and Seas, with that vigorous Zeal to serve Mankind, as St. *Paul* did ; none that suffered so much for his great Charity. A short Inventory of
his

his Hardships he himself gives us,
2 Cor. 11. *In Labours abundant, in Stripes above measure, in Prisons frequent, in Deaths often; of the Jews five times received I forty Stripes save one: Thrice was I beaten with Rods, once was I Stoned, thrice I suffered Shipwreck, a Night and a Day I have been in the Deep: In Journeying often; in Perils of Waters; in Perils of Robbers; in Perils by my own Country-men; in Perils by the Heathen; in Perils in the City; in Perils in the Wilderness; in Perils in the Sea; in Perils among false Brethren.*

Throughout this whole Series of Hardships, we never find the Apostle cast down, or disconsolate; but on the contrary, always Gloriying of his Sufferings, and of his Sufferings only; as Sorrowful,

32 *A Practical Discourse*

ful, (said he) yet always rejoicing,
2 Cor. 6. 10. And the Ground of
his Rejoicing was this, the *Testi-*
mony of his Conscience, that in sim-
plicity and godly sincerity he had
had his conversation in the world;
2 Cor. 1. 12. The comfortable
Consideration, that with an up-
right and honest Heart he had
endeavoured to serve Mankind;
and to express his great Care of
the Churches, which were com-
mitted to his Charge.

Plutarch could observe, "That
neither Riches, nor
Honour, nor Power,
nor any thing else, can bring
a Man such *Serenity and Divine*
Pleasure, as a pure Soul: A Soul
from whence good Actions flow, like
a gentle and limpid Stream from
a clean Fountain. Though Mis-
fortunes from abroad may af-
fect

“ fecht such a Man, yet compara-
“ tively they are not sharp, and
“ right Reason can help to take
“ away that little Acrimony that
“ is in them. *It is* (saith Plutarch)
“ *an evil Conscience that is truly do-*
“ *lorous and galling*; *it is this that*
“ *creates Griefs from within*; *Griefs*
“ *that are more heavy and afflictive*
“ *than any Accidents from without*:
“ *As a Fevere in the Blood is far*
“ *worse, and much more troublesome,*
“ *than the Heat of the Sun.* And
“ therefore the true way to have
“ solid Peace within, is to have
“ Minds full of *Probity*; and in
“ stead of entertaining any dishonest
“ Purposes, to be always *Virtuously*
“ *disposed*; and above all, to be
“ kindly, and benevolently, incli-
“ *ned*; and to do all the Good
“ that lieth in our power.

2. One great Reason, why a benign and gracious Temper brings such Advantage to ones own self is, because it is a Ray of the Divine Nature; so that by searching into his Heart, the Charitable Person cannot but be comforted with an humble and modest Assurance, that he hath much of God himself in him. And this is the second Thing we are to consider, for the exciting of a Spirit of Charity in us; how near it brings us to the ever-blessed God, even while we stay in the World. *God is Love*, saith the Scripture, *1 John 4. 8.* Not only because all Love is of God, as the Origine and Fountain of it; but because it is one of the infinite Beauties, and Glories of his Nature; so essential to him, and

and so perfect in him, that he is the most transcendent and excellent Exemplar of Love; made up of it so, that he may be well called, *Love it self.* By reason of this Love, God extendeth his Goodness to all his Creatures, and especially to Mankind; intending and ordering all Things here for their Good: Threatning and Admonishing, Commanding and Forbidding, Assisting and Strengthning, Cherishing and Chastizing them, in order still to that great End, their own Good; and in all the Methods and Dispensations of his Providence, expressing his Mercy and Tenderness towards us, as it is most agreeable to his Wisdom, and as far as it is consistent with the Honour and Authority of a Lawgiver. Nor are the wickedest Men denied a

36 *A Practical Discourse*

Share and Portion of his Goodness. For though by the Rules of strict Justice, he might without any more ado consign them to everlasting Misery, and cut them off in the midst of their Impieties; yet he offers to all Peace and Reconciliation in, and by, and for the sake of his Son, whom he sent into the World to seek and to save that which was *Lost*, that whosoever *believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life*: And, to express the sincerity of his Desire, that none should perish, but that all should come to Repentance; he daily shews the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering; that thereby he may lead Wicked Men to Repentance, not to be repented of. Nay, they have their Portion, even of the

the Things of this Life too; the
the Rebel, and the Runagate, is
taken care of, as well as the Heir,
nor are any cast out of the hands
of that Provident and Supreme
Governour of all Things, who
causeth his Sun to shine upon the
evil and upon the good, and sendeth
Rain on the just and the unjust,
Mat. 5. 45.

This great Goodness of God
towards us all, our Saviour him-
self makes use of, as a powerful
Argument and Motive for our
Charity and Tenderness towards
one another. And truly, if we
consider the infinite Perfections of
God, by reason whereof he stand-
eth not in the least need of any,
nor of all his Creatures; the
infinite Greatness of his Majesty
above us, and its Distance from
us: By reason whereof, he might

38 *A Practical Discourse*

look down upon us with Scorn and Contempt; His infinite *Power* over us, by reason whereof, he might easily cast us down into the bottomless Lake upon any Provocation: His infinite *Holiness* and *Excellency*, by reason whereof every Provocation comes to be of infinite Demerit; and together with all this, if we consider the infinite disproportion that is between the Sins acted against him, and the Faults we commit against one another, who stand all of us upon the same Level, and need all of us each others Assistance; nor have we any Power over one another, but what is given, and precarious: Nor provoke one another but with Offences that are Reciprocal: And after all our mutual Follies, are beholding to one another too, as well

well for asking, as for accepting each others Pardon ; If, I say, we consider all this, we must needs discover a great deal of Force in this Argumentation , that since God so loveth us, so pitieh us, so forbeareth us, so expresseth his Mercy and Compassion to us ; certainly we ought also, and the rather by much, to Love, and Pity, and forbear and shew Compassion and Kindness unto one another. Love and bless, and do good even to them that hate you ; *that you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven*, saith the great Exemplar of Charity, Matth. 5. 45. By the Children of God are meant, (according to the usual Scripture Sense of the Phrase) such People as partake of the *Divine Nature* ; such as resemble God, and are like-minded ;

40 *A Practical Discourse*

such as express a Similitude of those imitable Perfections, which are most eminently in Him: For, as our Dispositions and Tempers are, so is our Alliance. Thus our Saviour told those wicked Jews in *John 8. 44.* *Ye are of your Father the Devil;* And the Reason was, because they did the *Deeds*, and the *Lusts* of the Devil, were of Devilish Spirits and Inclinations, resembled the Devil himself by their Wickedness. Some Sins (as I told you before) are ascribed unto the Devil after a more peculiar manner; as *Pride*, the Sin that cast him out of Heaven: And *Lying*; for which reason he is called a *Lyer*, and the *Father of it*, *Joh. 8. 44.* And so *Slandering*; for which reason he is called the *Accuser of the Brethren*, *Rev. 12. 10.* So also are *Envie* and *Malice* the De-

Devil's Sins; for which reason he is called a *Murderer from the beginning*, John 8. 44. And is compared to a *Lion that walketh up and down, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. Now, though People that are of such wicked Spirits, may flatter themselves with a Perswasion that they belong to God; yet in God's own account, you see, they are of the Devil's Family, the Devil's Children, and consequently Heirs of the Devil's Damnation; because their Minds are of the same Vemonous Temper, and of the same ugly Hue and Complexion, as if they had been Cast in the same Mould. For the same Reason, they whose Souls are pure and upright, full of Grace and Goodness, are called the *Sons of God*, because they

42 *A Practical Discourse*

they communicate of his Divine and Perfect Nature, and resemble him in the Qualities and Dispositions of their Minds, as Children are wont to resemble their Parents, in the Features and Lineaments of their Bodies. Nor can any Man resemble him better, than by a kind and benevolent Disposition. Because the Scripture doth up and down, represent this as one of God's chief and most glorious Perfections; a Perfection wherein he himself seems most of all delighted: And therefore our Saviour discoursing of Mercy, Charity, and an Universal Love, *Math. 5.* singles out this as the strongest Argument to enforce the Practice of it; that we may be the *Children of our Father in Heaven*; and that we may be perfect, even as our Father which is in

in Heaven is perfect. 'Tis not any formal Professions that bring us near unto God ; 'tis not any dry Superstitions, or empty Performances ; much less is it a furious Zeal for Notions and Opinions, (alas ! all this may be consistent with a Devilish Temper and Mind :) No, it is a God-like Temper ; a Divine frame of Heart ; and chiefly, a kind, charitable, and beneficent Disposition : It is this, this, that ties us into a strict Relation to God, into such a close Fellowship and Communion with him, as maketh us his indeed : As that Disciple observes, whom the Lord Jesus particularly loved, and who breathed nothing but Love himself : 1 Joh. 4. 7. *Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God :* And again, V. 12. *If we love one another, God dwel-*

44 *A Practical Discourse*

dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us. And again, V. 13. *Hereby we know, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit;* (meaning that Temper and Affection which is so eminent in him.) And again, V. 16. *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Here then Men should lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and examine how they beat; what they are full of; and how they are affected: If Wrath and Bitterness, Malice and Rancour, Spightfulness and Uncharitableness, dwell in them; If Self-love, Unmercifulness and Cruelty *hardens* them; if the Wants and Miseries of others make no, or very little Impressions upon them; these are very bad Symptoms, plain Signs, that there is very little, if any thing at

at all of God in such Hearts ; nothing but what savours of a narrow Spirit, of a mean, sordid, and bruitish Nature. Humane, Rational Souls should have more exalted Faculties ; Souls that are of a Noble and Heavenly Extraction ; Souls that are so many Rays of the Divinity ; What can so become such Beings, as Thoughts that are beneficial like the Sun-beams ? Affections that are as large as the Universe ? Motions and Operations, like his who was the Redeemer of Souls ; whose whole Life was, *to go about doing Good* ? His Miracles, as well as his Sermons and Laws, were Charity : And by those Charitable Works he shewed *himself* to be the Son of God ; Nor may we think, we can give the World, or our own selves, any satisfactory Evidence of

46 *A Practical Discourse*

of our Relation to his Father or him, but by Works of Charity as his were; by doing Good to every Man as it lies in our power, without Discrimination; by Intreating them gently; by bearing Wrongs and Indignities with meekness of Spirit; by putting our Cause into God's hands without Self-revenge; by blessing and wishing well to our very Enemies; and by expressing our sincere Affections to all Mankind.

3. These Things do naturally carry a great deal of Force with them: So that if no Obligations were upon us from any Laws to this purpose, the Divine Excellence of these Actions would Recommend them to our Practice, because they are God-like Actions; and therefore must needs be of the highest Excellence in their own

own Nature. But besides this, we are to consider yet, in the third place, how helpful a Spirit of Charity is to us, in answering the great Ends of the New Covenant. *The grace of God (or the Gospel) that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 11, 12. Which shews, that the design of the Evangelical Covenant is, to reclaim Mankind to the Love and Practice of all manner of Virtue. Because God is a most perfect Being himself, of infinite Goodness and Rectitude in his Nature; his blessed Purpose is to imprint upon our Souls his own Image, according to the Capacity of our finite Faculties. And in order here-

hereunto he hath given us by his own Son, (the brightness of his own Glory) not only the most excellent Promises ; all confirm'd and seal'd with his Blood upon the Cross ; but moreover the most perfect Example, and the most perfective Duties. Now of these Duties, this of Universal Charity and Love is the Chief. For Love being such a Divine Affection, the Fruits of it must needs be Divine too, if it be sincere and zealous. As for Instance ; If our Love to God be pure and hearty, it cannot but move us to a solicitous Care, of doing nothing that is repugnant to God's Will and Holiness ; because this Affection is naturally attended with an earnest desire to please and imitate its Object, or the Party we intirely love. So also, if

if a Man's Love to himself be Rational and Regular, it must needs put him upon doing himself all the Good, especially all the Spiritual Good, he can; because his Spiritual Part, the Soul, is to live for ever, and therefore requires his tenderest Care, that it may be everlastinglly Happy. The same Inclination doth true Charity work in us towards all other Men; to be beneficial to them likewise, for it always operates according to the nature of the Thing, and according to the condition of the Object. It cannot possibly be of any advantage to our Maker, because he is out of the reach of our Charity, and too high for it. *Can a Man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art*

50 *A Practical Discourse*

righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? Job 22. 2, 3. And again; If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he of thy hand? Job 35. 7. No; all our Goodness extendeth not to him, Pf. 16. 2. He neither needs it, nor is he capable of being benefited by it; because he is infinitely perfect and happy in himself. But our Love to God hath this Effect; it makes us admire and adore him, serve and worship, and endeavour to please him, and to be like unto him; and so, it is an Instrument of Godliness, as well as of Sobriety and Righteousness. In this respect it may be said to be a Fulfilling of the whole Law, even the first Table of it; though indeed it serves most directly to Fulfil the Second. And thus the Apostle argues,

Rom.

Rom. 13.8,9,10. *He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law:* For this, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery;* *thou shalt not Kill;* *thou shalt not Steal;* *thou shalt not bear false Witness;* *thou shalt not Covet;* and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, viz. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* *Love worketh no ill to his Neighbour;* therefore *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* We cannot be Injurious to our own Souls, or to the rest of Mankind, or to God himself, but it must proceed from the want of those enlarged Hearts, and those fervent, and tender Affections, which the Gospel requires of us all. Here then we should employ our greatest Pains, and use our utmost Endeavours, to kindle in us a true Spirit of Charity: For it is *the end*

52 *A Practical Discourse*

of the Commandment, 1 Tim. 1.5. And because it is the most Perfective Grace, the Scripture sets it above all Things, even above Faith and Hope;
1 Cor. 13. 13. Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity. The greatest, not only because it is most profitable to others, which the other two Virtues are not; for Faith and Hope keep at home; a Man believeth for himself, and hopeth for himself; nor is ones Neighbour the better for them: 'Tis this, that is the active, the dispensing Grace, that walks about doing good, and every one fares the better for it:) But 'tis the greatest Virtue too, because of the three, it is the most beneficial to ones self also: It gives him solid Reasons for his Hope, which otherwise would be groundless; and Perfection to his Faith,

Faith, which otherwise would be fruitless, and consequently unprofitable even at home: *The Hypocrite's Hope shall perish ; And his Trust shall be as a Spider's Web ; Job 8.13,14.* A sorry weak Thing to bear ones Heart up, especially on a Death-bed. For Hope, if it be right, must be built upon some Promise, nor can it go further than the Promise it self goes ; for if God hath not promised me his Mercy, how can I reasonably hope for it ? Now it is plain, that there is no Promise of that Nature, but on condition of Charity on our part. The Texts are so clear, that they need no Comment : *1 John 3. 10. In this the Children of God are manifested, and the Children of the Devil : whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother.*

E 3 And

54 *A Practical Discourse*

And again, V. 14. *He that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death,* (or is in a deadly State.) And again, V. 15. *Whosoever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer; and ye know, that no Murderer hath Eternal Life abiding in him.* Nay, to shew how extensive our Charity must be, for our hopes of Mercy at God's hands, our Saviour himself hath passed this Decretory Sentence, That there is no Mercy for us, unless we shew it our selves, and that even to our Enemies; *Mat. 6. 15. If ye forgive not Men their Trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your Trespasses.*

As for *Faith*, great Things indeed are spoken of it in the Scripture; but withal we are told, that *without Works it is dead*; such a spiritless, empty Thing without a Life of Virtue, that it no more

de-

deserves the Character of a saving Faith, than a dead Carkass deserves the Name of a Man. Faith, as it is distinguished from Works, signifies here an Act of the Understanding, whereby a Man owns the Authority of Jesus Christ, and assents to his Doctrines. Now this Assent of the Mind is required, in order to the Practice of Christ's Religion, because it is not imaginable how People can be brought to obey his Laws sincerely and universally, unless they be first perswaded in their Hearts, that he was the Son of God, the very Christ, sent by his Father from Heaven to help Mankind thither. This puts a Divine Stamp upon the whole Christian Religion; it gives it an unquestionable Credit, and renders every the most difficult Ar-

ticle of it worthy of all Acceptation, because it came from God, and was revealed by the Son of God; and therefore must needs be infallibly true. Upon this account, the belief of Christ's Authority and of the Truth, and certainty of his Religion, is the first thing necessary: And for this Reason it was, that his first Disciples took such pains every where to prove him to be the very Christ, and inculcated the necessity of Faith in him: For this was the ready way to bring the World in Obedience to him; and nothing but this could prevail with Men, to observe Christ's Institution with such strictness, as the Primitive Christian did; and for the sake of it to venture and undergo upon all Occasions the utter loss of all.

Faith

Faith then being required to produce Obedience, as the proper Means in order to this noble End, cannot possibly stand us in stead, if it be only a Notion in our Heads; if it be a liveless and unfruitful Perswasion; if it be naked and alone; if it hath not that effect and power upon our Souls, as to bring on the Love and Practice of those other Virtues and Graces, for the Production whereof it hath been all along intended. Now of those Virtues and Graces, Charity is the very chiefest; this must accompany our Faith, to make it as it should be, such a Faith as we may safely rely on; and therefore St. *Paul* describing that Assent of the Mind which availeth indeed, calls it, *Faith which worketh by love*, Gal. 5. 6. Or, as some Learned Criticks would rather

ther render it, *Faith which is consummate and perfected by Charity*. The truth is, all our Notions are very imperfect Things without this ; and though these Notions be never so right and Orthodox, yet are they vastly short of our true Duty till they reach our Hearts, and make us to open our Bowels towards other Men, and to exercise our Hands in Offices of Love. And therefore, since without a Spirit of Charity nothing will avail us, nor answer the great Ends of Christ's Religion, no not our very Faith, (according to that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 13. *Though I have all Knowledge, and all Faith, and give away Goods, Body, Life and all, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing* : Since, I say, it is thus) it is of infinite Concernment to us all, so to subdue our Minds

Minds and Passions, as to approve our selves in this respect the hearty Disciples of a meek and charitable Jefus. Many Voluminous Disputations have been written, which might have been better spared about Faith, and Works, and Justification, whether we are justified by the one, or the other, or by both ; and great Endeavours have been used to Reconcile St. *Paul* and St. *James* upon this Point : Rather I might say, to set them at Variance ; for their Sense is the same touching the necessity of Works Evangelical ; as Piety, Humility, Meekness, Patience, and the like ; and very plainly and particulary upon the Point of Charity. Here the most vulgar Eye may see their clear Agreement : In Jesus Christ *neither Circumcision availeth any thing*, nor

Un-

60 *A Practical Discourse*

Uncircumcision, but in Faith which worketh by Love, saith St. Paul, Gal. 5. 6. And, He shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy, saith St. James, Jam. 2. 13. Therefore in a Case, that is so positively and fully decided, we should leave Controversie, and fall to Practice; and study how to be fruitful in good Works, rather than how to make our Brains Prolifick: This is the right way of performing the Conditions of the Evangelical Covenant, and of bringing Peace and Comfort to our own Minds. I am sure when we come to die, it will turn to far better account for our poor Souls, than all the Disputes, which we shall leave behind us; and which we shall leave too, with this great Question which perhaps will never be determin'd,

termin'd, Whether Men have managed them with as much Truth as Uncharitableness?

4. Fourthly, A Charitable Temper serves to prepare and fit us for the Everlasting Happiness of another Life. Many Virtues are required to dispose us for the Enjoyment of that Happiness, to make us capable of it; to render us *meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, Col. 1. 12. Neither will the Decrees, nor the Power, nor the Mercy of God, bring us to that Fruition, without due Qualifications on our part; because there can be no true Happiness but where there is a Correspondence and Suitableness between the Mind and the Thing; if a Man be not pleased with what he Enjoys, nor finds

62 *A Practical Discourse*

finds any delightful Relish in it ; it is impossible for him to be happy by enjoying it ; nor can Heaven it self be a place of Pleasure to those, whose Minds have as little Taste of those Divine Satisfactions, as a vitiated Palate hath of the most pleasant Meats and Drinks.

To prepare our selves for those Delights, it is necessary to transform our Souls into the love of them now ; and to accustom our selves now ; to the familiar and delightful Practice of those Virtues, wherein the Felicity of another Life doth really consist : Of which Virtues, a charitable Disposition is one, and a very great one ; because we shall be sure to carry that Disposition with us out of this World to continue with us everlastingily, and to make us happy

py indeed in the enjoyment of a suitable Society of Blessed Spirits which are all made up of Love. *Charity never faileth*, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 13. 8. *Whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away:* But Charity endureth for ever; it is an inseparable Glory of the Souls of just Men made perfect. And this is another Reason, why Charity is set above Faith and Hope, because it is of infinite Duration: As it is the most beneficial, so it is the most lasting Virtue. *Faith is the Evidence (or firm Perswasion) of Things not yet seen*, Heb. 11. 1. And when we come to behold God Face to Face, it will be no longer Faith, but Vision. And so Hope is the expectation of Things that

that are future; and when we come to the actual Possession of them, it will be no longer Hope, but Fruition or Enjoyment. But Love is of an unchangeable Nature, nor will it ever cease, because it is a Ray of the Immutable and Everlasting God. This is the Happiness of Heaven, that though there be different Ranks and Orders of Angels, different States of Beautified Spirits, different Degrees of Glory: And though God himself be infinitely exalted above all; yet Love is the Universal Principle and Perfection, which unites God, and all his Glorious Creatures with him, into one inviolable Communion.

This being the State of the other World, how can we be prepared for the Enjoyment of it, or be fit to take pleasure in it, unless

we

we be Connaturaliz'd to it by a correspondence and agreeableness of Temper. Some thoughtful and wise Philosophers among the old Heathens went upon this Principle, that *all Happiness consisteth in the Perfection of Nature*. And they did not only believe, "That the Soul is Immortal; and " shall find the Rewards of ^{simplic. in} *Virtue*, after its depar- ^{Epicet.}

"ture from the Body; But be-
"lieved too; That its Felicity after
"Death lieth in such a perfection
" of its Faculties, and Powers; as is
"most suitable to a Rational Being:
"That is, in perfectly knowing
"every Thing which it is capable
"of knowing; and in perfectly
"loving and doing Things that
"are most Excellent. These are
great Notions from Men that had
not the benefit of Divine Reveala-

66 *A Practical Discourse*

tion: Nor do we find any thing in them, but what is highly consistent with the Christian Philosophy, for *when that which is perfect is come*, we shall be like God himself in the Rectitude and Perfection of our Nature, according to the Capacities of Created Beings: And Charity, being the greatest and most God-like Virtue, every perfected Soul must needs be conformable to the Divine Nature by it; which yet is not possible for any Soul to be, but by exercising in this Life all those good Acts, which serve to form it unto a Charitable Temper: For this Temper is acquired as other Habits are, by the constant Repetition of Actions, which are therefore to be our Care and Business in this World, because Heaven is a place not for the beginning,

ning, but for the consummating of a Life of Virtue: Nor can Death so alter and change a Man's whole State, as to furnish his Soul with Inclinations and Qualities, quite contrary to those it contracted in the Flesh; so that if we be not charitably affected now, we do but flatter our selves with vain and lying Hopes of a Blessed Eternity.

Though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing; saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 13. 2, 3. For as it is

68. *A Practical Discourse*

God's Will and Purpose, that Uncharitable Souls shall not by any means come into his Presence, so the very Nature of the Thing renders their Access impossible ; because they are not fit to be Partakers of those Pleasures, which are at God's right hand for evermore. Hatred and Malice, Rancour and Revenge, Spightfulness and Envy, are the Works of Hell, and the Dispositions of those who are going apace thither ; nor are they fit to be in any Society, but that of Devils and damned Spirits, to whom they are already a-kin by Vice, and into whose Company they are prepared to be gathered by an assimilation and likeness of Nature. Upon this account it concerns us as much as our Everlasting Happiness is worth, by all possible Acts of
Cha-

Charity to bring our Minds to such a loving Frame and Genius, as, when we die, may be suitable to the State and Condition of Heaven.

'Tis true, some particular Branches of Charity will cease there, because there will be no need of them among the Blessed. There will be no need of Alms-giving, because in Heaven there are no manner of Wants. There will be no need of Mutual Forgiveness, because in Heaven there are no Injuries and Affronts: Nor will there be any need of bearing with one another's Infirmitiess, because in Heaven there is neither Sin, nor Error: However, these and the like Acts of Charity must be performed and repeated by us here on Earth, because in their kind they all serve as Means in

70 *A Practical Discourse*

order to the main End; to cleanse the Mind from all Leaven of Malice and Naughtiness, to raise and improve the Soul by degrees, to perfect it insensibly by an Universal Love, and to produce in it a true, Heavenly Temper, though they be of no further use to us, when once we come to the actual Possession of an Heavenly State. To illustrate this a little by a familiar Similitude: In the training up of a Youth in the ordinary course of Learning, many lesser Rules are necessary in the beginning; a long Method, great Readings, many Observations, and various sorts of Exercises, are necessary in the Progress; and all these help in their kind to improve ones Parts insensibly, and to make at last a compleat Scholar, though in the course of his Studies some

of

of these Things are apt to drop out of his Memory : And when he comes to be a Man, and a Man of great Knowledge and Judgment, many of them are quite forgotten and lost; because they cease from being of any further use, the Practice of them is no longer necessary ; but yet the Noble Effect, which by the former Practice of them was produced, doth remain to the last; namely, an Understanding now polished and perfected to a very high pitch by an Universal Knowledge : The subservient Rules and Method are laid aside, and gone, many of them ; but the Perfection of the main Faculties, and the Improvement of his Parts, holds as long as his Life continues. It is much after this manner, that a Man is trained up, and

disciplined into a perfect Saint, Several sorts of Charity are required of us now, which are proper to a Militant State, to a needy, suffering Condition; and therefore they must cease of course, when we come to a State of Bliss and Glory.

Nevertheless they are at present wonderfully Advantageous to us, because they do more or less all contribute towards Perfection; they all serve in their kind, and in some measure, to bring the Soul to an habit of Universal Love, and so to fit it for that blessed Place above, into which nothing that is Uncharitable can enter.

By the Co-operation of every Charitable Act, the Soul is better'd by degrees, though we may not perceive its gradual Proficiency every moment: It is the more and

and more improved and heightned towards Heaven ; and the more and more accomplished for it still ; so that when it departs out of the Body, a State of perfect Peace, and perfect Harmony, and perfect Love, is the most proper for it ; nay, (if I may so speak) the only *Natural State* for it to be in : And then the Soul finds the Noble Effects of every Work of Love ; the Divine Habits which every Work helped to produce , and the Unspeakable Perfection every Work did prepare it for ; though in its flight to Heaven it droppeth some Works, and leaves them behind it, as the Prophet did his Mantle.

Men talk at random when they speak of going to Heaven without a Charitable Temper : they may

74 *A Practical Discourse*

may as well speak of seeing the Lord *without Holiness*; for Charity is one great part of Holiness. And therefore our great Care must be, to mould our Hearts into such a Frame and Condition, that we may be fit and agreeable Company for the Glorious Family of Love. And this is not to be done, but by using and accustoming our selves to the constant Practice of Universal Charity now. For Habits are gotten by many Repeated Acts; and to perform the several Offices of Charity is, both the effectual Means of gaining a Spirit of Charity, and a plain Argument and Token too, that there is such a Spirit in us, especially when those Performances and Acts are more and more abundant.

3. Which brings me to the third Thing, that in the beginning of this Discourse I proposed to shew; namely, the Way and Manner after which our Christian Charity is to be expressed. For those Expressions are manifold and various; and those People are mightily deceived, who restrain and limit all Charity to Alms-giving.

That indeed is one Expression of Charity, when our Alms come from a Charitable Heart; for if that be wanting, all our Alms loseth the Name of Charity. *Though I give all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 3.* You see, that in the Apostle's account,

count, Alms-Deeds may be without Charity ; that is, when Vanity or Ostentation is the Principle from whence they flow. But though they come from a right Principle, from a kind and compassionate Heart, yet are they but a little part of Charity ; as we find by St. *Paul's* Description of its several Branches in the place above-mentioned.

Now because we cannot follow a better Guide than St. *Paul*, I shall proceed upon this Subject according to those Noble Characters which he himself gives there of Charity ; intending as I go along to discourse of those Things after a particular and distinct manner ; which the holy Apostle hath laid together within the compass of a few, but very significant and comprehensive Expressions.

1. And

1. And there are two Characters given of Charity, in reference to Anger. The first teacheth us to be very *Slow to Anger*. *Charity* (saith St. Paul) *suffereth long*; Meaning, that a Charitable Man is not presently moved out of a calm and composed State.

2. The second teacheth us to moderate our Passion, that it may not swell beyond a due measure, when there is any just and sufficient cause of Resentment, *Vers. 5.* *Charity*, *On the contrary, is not easily provoked*; so indeed it is render'd in our Common Translation; but rather it should be render'd, *Is not highly provoked*, or *exasperated*; Meaning, that for Charity-sake no Man must suffer, no not any just Anger to turn into Fury, so as

to

78 *A Practical Discourse*
to make him either to meditate
Revenge, or to fall into indecent
Rages.

Now though these be two distinct Subjects, the one touching the Rise, the other touching the Progress of this Passion; yet because both may easily fall under one Consideration, I shall speak of both at this time, and in this place, as far as they relate to the Subject Matter of Christian Charity; leaving some other Things more particularly to be consider'd, when I shall have opportunity and leisure to form some Practical Discourses more upon other Christian Virtues; and upon that of *Meekness* among the rest.

Anger is not Universally Evil; for the Apostle's Direction is, *Eph.4.26. Be ye angry, and sin not:* Which shews, that all manner of Anger

Anger is not sinful. But there are three sorts, which are inconsistent with the Law of Charity, and very displeasing unto God.

First, Rash Anger; when a Man is apt to be soon offended, and to let his Passions take fire presently, not fairly examining the Nature and Circumstances of the supposed Provocation, nor considering thoroughly, as he ought, whether there be just and reasonable cause for Displeasure. This is a wicked Disposition, that proceeds from Pride, Capriciousness, and ill Nature; and it looks as if the froward Creature matched for his Neighbours' *Haltings*, and wanted only an opportunity of Quarrelling; and took Delight and Pleasure in a Life of Contention, and in rendering himself un-
easie

caſe and vexatious to others. This is far from favouring of the true Spirit of Charity, especially as it is craised by the Law and Example of Jesus Christ, whose Love to us ought to be the Standard, and Measure of our Charity to one another. But besides this, the Effects which follow our unreasonableness are very hurtful and injurious, when Things are taken amiss rashly, and with such a quick hand. For we are all apt to be mistaken, and then most likely when Men's Actions are not permitted, to fall under our due Consideration. But we run away headlong, and in great haſt upon indeliberate Apprehensions. In this caſe Innocence it ſelf too often ſuffers; by reaſon that the Merits of the Caufe are not calmly inquired into at the firſt,

first, and Men are hardly perswaded to examine them afterwards, because few care to be thought guilty of an Error. By means hereof, a long Train of Mischief followeth ; Passion still growing higher and hotter than at the first kindling. And therefore, when our Passions begin to be warm, we should have an Eye to the Fewel ; consider the Cause which blows the Spark ; give our selves time to think, and to think as candidly and favourably as we can, lest we go on to punish Men quite contrary to the Laws of Charity, and Justice too, not so much for their Crimes, as for our own false Presumptions ; and if we would do this very carefully, that is, give room for Thought and favourable Consideration, before we lift up the hand, it would

G both

both lessen the Passion, and either stop, or moderate the Effects of it.

Secondly; Though Anger be Just, in respect of its Cause; yet if it lasteth a longer time than it should, it is Sinful. The sooner our Resentments go out, the better it is for our selves, and others: And best of all when they die presently after they are conceiv'd; when a Man's Anger is like the Fool's Mirth, which *Salomon* compares to the *crackling of Thorns* on a Flame, that vanisheth in a few moments; for glowing Coals are very dangerous; the longer ones Displeasure continues, the more averse he is to Purposes and Expressions of Charity; the stiffer in his Resentments, the more inflexible, and the harder to be Reconciled.

conciled. That which should have been but a transient Fit, precipitates in time, and setteth into a fixt Habit; and that ranckles and frets inwardly, and eateth so deep, and so venomously into the Bowels, that it proves a deadly Ulcer; and then it ends, as in the case of the Spleen, which was once a natural and innocent Infirmitie, but at last becomes a very painful and mischievous Disease. The Apostle therefore gives us all this Noble Rule of Charity, *Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath*, Ephes. 4. 26. This looks as if it were a Branch of the Law of Nature: For *Plutarch* tells us of those ancient *Pagans* the Disciples of *Pythagoras*, Plutarch
de Frat.
amore.

“ That if there happen’d
“ any Differences or Brawlings
“ between them in the Day, their

G 2 “ custom

84 *A Practical Discourse*

“ custom was to shake hands, and
“ salute one another before the
“ setting of the Sun. Anger is
such a bruitish Thing, that they
thought it unbecoming Men and
Philosophers, to carry it in their
Bosoms to Bed. But St. *Paul's*
Reason was of a higher Nature ;
for the Evening was ever a time
of Devotion ; and we must part
with our Passions before the close
of the Day, lest a mixture of Ha-
tred pollute our Evening Sacri-
fice, and infect our Prayers, so as
to turn them into an Abomina-
tion. The Learned *Grotius* looks
upon it as a Phrase, that was usual
among the *Hebrews*, when they
meant the putting any Matter off
to a longer time : And so indeed
we find it in *Deut. 24. 15.* *At his*
day thou shalt give the Hireling his
bire, neither shall the Sun go down
upon

upon it. Which is otherwise express'd, though to the same effect, *Lev. 19. 13. Thou shalt not defraud thy Neighbour, neither rob him, the Wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.* Well, though we suppose the Apostle's Expression to be Proverbial, yet *Grotius* reckons it an Application of that Law, *Deut. 21. 23. That the Body of every Criminal that was hanged, was to be buried before night.* And then St. Paul's Argument is the stronger still: For if Punishments inflicted by Publick Authority were not to continue till the Evening; much less may any Private Differences or Grudges hold till Sun-set.

Anger is for the most part a Criminal, and too often provcs an Homicide; and 'tis good to

G 3 throw

throw it aside, and to commit it unto the Grave betimes : If we let it sleep with us, and not rid it quite out of the way, the next day's Sun will give it a new heat, and make it outrageous.

For Thirdly, This Passion doth many times grow and swell to such a bulk, that nothing will satisfie it but Revenge : It riseth by degrees, if not quell'd in time, from Rash to Inordinate ; from Inordinate to Implacable ; from Implacable to Revengeful : And then is Anger sinful in the highest degree of all ; when it breedeth Gall and Choler to that extremity, that the Stomach will not be satisfied without a Glut of Revenge. This chiefly is that *Bitterness* and *Wrath*, which the Holy Scripture so severely condemneth : *For it*

worketh not the Righteousness of God,
Jam. 1. 20. It carrieth a Man beyond a possibility of doing Things that are right in God's Eyes ; for its Designs and Actions are still mischievous, and therefore it is direct Enmity against God and Man. Charity is quite forgotten, though the Wretches own Pardon can never be sealed without it. Justice is not heard, though it cry never so loud ; The violent Creature considers not what is Just, but what may be Hurtful. The Laws of Christ are trampled under foot, though they were intended to sweeten all our Tempers, to smooth and soften our Spirits, to render us Humane, Meek, Patient, Gentle, Courteous, Merciful and Benign. The Revengeful Man stands in sturdy Opposition against all ; nor

is there any Mischief against his Inclinations, if it be within his power; especially if he can act it with safety. Neither are ones Fortunes, nor ones Credit, nor ones very Life secure, if within the reach of a Revengeful Arm. Nor do I think, that Humane Nature is capable of a more Wicked Disposition than this is; because it sticks at nothing which lies in its way, though never so Mean and Base, never so Dishonourable and Scandalous, never so Barbarous and Cruel.

Therefore, to beget in our Hearts a Spirit of true Christian Charity, to Nourish and to Express it also, here we should begin to Subdue our Minds, to Tame and Govern our wild Passions, and to bring our selves to a due Temperament and Composure: Considering

dering what a crowd of Business we are in here, and what a justling World this is, we must not expect, but that there will be Offences. But then we should remember, that we are all of us one Man's Children; made of the same Flesh and Blood, subject to the same Follies and Infirmities, and for that Reason are equally obliged all of us, to take Pity and Compassion upon one another. There is not one of us, but stands in need of an Atonement: And the right way of making it is, not by Sacrificing our Charity; (that will encrease our Guilt, instead of being an acceptable Oblation;) but to serve the brutish part of our Nature, our Unreasonable Passions, as the Ancients were wont to serve their Cattel; to bring them to the Fire, and

and make them Victims. But to speak more particularly: You see how many ways Anger becometh Sinful; and to keep our selves Innocent, we must be very careful to express our Charity, by ordering and behaving our selves Charitably in every respect.

First, Govern the Beginnings of Passion, after a Charitable manner. Do not presently give up Reason to Spleen; nor cease to be Men, because you conceive your selves affronted. But Pause a while; Consider, Think, Examine, Argue in your Minds with Calmness, with Deliberation, and with Candour. Before there be an Eruption of Choler, I wish People would attentively repeat the Lord's Prayer; it might be a good means of teaching them to be

be Charitable unto others, by being Charitable unto themselves; and by begging God's Pardon for their own Trespasses, to forgive those that Trespass against them. It was the Advice of a Philosopher to *Augustus*, " That when he was moved, he should Read over the *Greek* Alphabet before he spoke, or did any thing. For Men seldom do any thing in Anger, but what they do amiss, and afterwards repent of. Passion is an ill Councillor, and a worse Executioner: And therefore before the Foot or the Hand stirreth, 'tis good to Delay, and to take Time: In that Time, ask your selves a few Questions; Whether the Proyocation be Just? Whether it be not Inconsiderable, and beneath the Cognizance of a Rational Creature, that ought to have

have a great Mind, above the reach of every Trifle? Whether the Offender be not a good Man in the main? Whether he himself had no Provocations? Whether he did it not through the Infirmitiy and Weakness of Humane Nature? Whether it was not Undesigned? Whether Ignorance, Imprudence, or Inadvertency, was not the Cause of it? Whether your Folly will not be as great as his, or perhaps greater? Whether he doth not Repent? Whether you do not intend to Repent your self? Why your Repentance should be considered, and not his? Whether your Patience, Lenity, and Greatness of Mind, will not oblige him, and make him love you? And, Whether the poor Man may not have one time or other a fair opportunity of making you

you Amend? 'Tis odds, but by that time these Things are well considered, your Blood will cool, and be brought to a Temper; and then you will have gained a Brother: Nay, you will have gained your self; you will have the better of your self; you will be a Winner in both respects; you will go off with the Comfort and Honour of a double Conquest, and each gotten with a very gentle Hand.

If, for want of due Consideration, the Fit continueth some hours, you must, Secondly, Govern the Fever so, as to keep it from being Hectick. There is a time for all Things under the Sun, and then it is high time for you to express your Charity when the Sun is ready to set. Cool Thoughts

Thoughts should be for the Night ; and when the Hurries of the Day are over , we should leave off Wrath , and let go Dis-pleasure too. An Implacable Tem-
per is very Offensive to the Divine Being , because it is utterly void of Charity , and true Religion. By the Laws of Christianity , every one hath a Right to his Neigh-
bour's Mercy ; especially if he be sorry for his Faults , and desires Forgivenes. That indeed every Offender is bound to do ; and the least he can do , is to ask Par-
don ; yet that is enough , where the Injury is not so great , as to require Satisfaction. Repentance and Intreaties are Satisfaction suf-
ficient in common and ordinary Cases : And when a Man hath gone thus far , he hath acted like a Christian , and may safely put his

his Cause into God's hand, who is an *Avenger* of all that are *oppreſſed with Wrong*. But the Wretch that hardeneth his Heart, and stoppeth his Ear against Christian Application, contracteth Guilt intolerable: His own Sins are all bound; no outward Acts of Religion avail him, for want of a Charitable Spirit within; his very Prayers are stopt; for how shall God hear him, that heareth not his Brother? He heapeth daily such a Load of Sins upon himself, as makes him uncapable of the Mercy of that good God, who expects no other Satisfaction at our hands, for the Affronts against his own Majesty, but our Repentance and Prayers.

Let us hear our Great Law-giver, *Luke 17. 3, 4.* *Take heed unto your selves; If thy Brother trespass*

trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him : And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I Repent, thou shalt forgive him. Nay, I very much question, whether a Christian may stay for an Offender's Repentance in every Case. For St. Matthew delivers us that Law of Charity without that Condition, *Matth. 18.* And if our Saviour's Love to us, be the Rule and Standard of our Love to one another ; it seems to be our Duty, and that which best becomes the Generous Spirit of a Christian, to be beforehand with our Enemies, as Christ was with his : And even for the Offended Party to endeavour for Reconciliation as He did ; though but in hopes of their Repentance.

But,

But, Thirdly, Let a Provocation be never so just, and Resentments never so long-liv'd, we must above all Things beware of all Actions, and of all Intentions that are Revengeful. For Proceedings of this kind are a most horrible Violation of the Laws of Religion, Charity, and Humanity also. They are for Mischief and Hurt only ; and therefore Savour of the Devil's Temper, and Seal a Man up to Eternal Flames. It is a dreadful thing to want Bowels, I may call it, a great Curse ; for a Man seldom comes to that high pitch of Inhumanity, as to have a hardned Heart, but by the Judgment of God, though the Work be a Man's own ; yet so it is, that a Trade of Uncharitableness draws on Cruelty : So that by

H put-

putting off the *Christian*, People learn by degrees to throw aside *Man* too ; whereas the Design of our Religion is , rather to make us *Angels*. To this purpose we are strictly commanded, not to Avenge our selves ; not to Recompense Evil for Evil ; but to overcome Evil with Good ; to be Patient , Merciful , and Kind ; if an Enemy Hunger, to Feed him ; if he Thirst, to give him Drink ; and thus to heap Coals of Fire upon his Head ; not to hurt, but to in-tender and melt him.

I do not deny, but great Prudence and Caution may be used in Treating such as have done us considerable Wrongs : For tho' we are bound to forgive them, and to wish them well, as sincerely as we wish our selves, and to do them good Offices ; yet we are

are not obliged to love them in an equal degree and proportion, nor to take them again into our Bosom, (at least not presently) who have already wounded us to the quick. However, all manner of Revenge is utterly unlawful. Revenge is, not when a Man punishment an Offender justly, moderately, and with a charitable Purpose of doing him, or others Good, (so Parents punish their very Children, and Magistrates a Delinquent;) but when he thirsteth to wreak, and execute his Hatred, only, or chiefly, to satisfie an enraged Mind, and with a cruel Design, to grieve, afflict, or torment his Neighbour. This is extream Wickedness in a Christian; a Thing that was Condemned even by the wiser Heathens: Nay, that which was not

permitted, the *Jews* themselves to do with their own private Hands, though some Things were permitted them for the Hardness of their Hearts: They were allowed indeed to require *an Eye for an Eye*, and *a Tooth for a Tooth*; but this was to be done by the Magistrates Hand; the rest of the *Jews* had a common standing Law given them, *Lev. 19. 18. Thou shalt not avenge (thy self,) nor bear any Grudge against the Children of thy People.*

All manner of Revenge is now sinful, though it be sought even of Publick Authority; and that too under another Name, and with specious Colours. Christianity is the highest Improvement of Virtue; and the Laws of it are so strict and perfect, so sublime and pure, that all Tinctures of

of Malice and Ill-will are a Violation of them. The Spirits of Christians should be above all such base Alloy; they should be refined and raised to that high and noble Pitch, and true Greatness, as to pass by Affronts with Meekness and Charity, and (if it be possible) with Slightings and Disdain. This is that true Greatness and Nobleness of Mind, which becomes us all. For it is rightly observed by *Plutarch*, and other old Moralists who have written against our Unreasonable and Foolish Passions, That Desires of Revenge proceed from a Defect in Nature, from Infirmitie and Weakness; from something that is Little, and Mean; and therefore those Creatures are most addicted to it, which are most Contemptible; Bees and Wasps, and

H 3 those

those Insects among Mankind too, which therefore bite, and sting, and vex, and wound, because they are of low and sordid Spirits.

“Wrath (saith *Plutarch*) doth *Plutarch de ira coib. 11* “some Things that are terrible, and some that are ridiculous: And therefore “of all the Passions we are subject to, this is the most hated, “and the most despised. A plain Argument, that this Passion is of the meanest Extraction; that it proceeds from the most abject, degenerate, and sordid Natures; from Slime and Dirt that is utterly inconsistent with the Purity of Religion.

That Holy and Just One, who descended from Heaven to cleanse, raise, and perfect our Nature, took great care to rid us of all this Filth, by the noblest Precepts, and

and by his own (the noblest and most perfective) Example. The Infinite Excellence and Dignity of his Divine Nature, made all Offences against him swell to infinite degrees of Guilt, and consequently rendered the Actors of them liable to all the degrees of Punishment, which infinite Justice might have inflicted. And yet, with what evenness of Mind did he endure all Reproaches, Contumelies, Disgrace, Stripes, Buffetings, Wounds, Nails, and Cross too? He bore all, though from the rudest, the vilest, the most malicious Hands, with Patience and Lenity; with Meekness and Self-denial; with Humility and Resignation; with Candour and the highest Charity to the last Gasp. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered,*

he died

H 4

he

he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, 1 Pet. 2. 23. And what was this for? Why (saith the Apostle) Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.

4. Having thus discoursed of the two Characters of *Charity* relating to *Anger*, and shew'd how we are to express this great Christian Grace in each respect; by Commanding, Governing, and Moderating that mischievous Passion, I proceed now to the Consideration of the next Property, which is called *Kindness*; *Charity suffereth long, and is Kind*: Meaning, that a Charitable Person is Compassionate, and Beneficent, both

both in Disposition, and Actions, ready in every respect to do all the Good he can. By giving us a Description, St. *Paul* shews us a Duty; and he opens it particularly in another place, which seems to be an Explication of this whole Verse; *Eph. 4. 31, 32.* *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you with all Malice; And be ye kind one to another.* The Greek Word in both places is in effect the same; and the Apostle's meaning is, that instead of hating and maligning one another, we should be tenderly affected, and useful to each other, ready from our Hearts to do one another all the good Offices which lie in our Power. Now for the due Practising of this Matter, the Laws of Charity

re-

106 *A Practical Discourse*
require of us these following
Things.

1. That we have a true inward
Sense of other Men's Wants and
Afflictions. This is that which
the Holy Scripture calls *Tender-
heartedness*, Ephes. 4. 32. *Bowels
of Mercy*, Colos. 3. 12. And,
Having Compassion one of another,
1 Pet. 3. 8. By which Expressions
is meant, that we should Sympa-
thize with all that are in Distress,
and have a Fellow-feeling of one
another's Afflictions. For where
Men's Hearts are so hard, and
crusty, that their Brethren's Cala-
mities make little or no Impres-
sions upon them, there it is im-
possible for Charity to be so Kind-
ly, Free, and Generous, as the
Laws of Christianity do require.
*Whoso bath this World's good, and
feeth*

feeth his Brother hath need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God (or of Man) in him ?

i John 3. 17. It holdeth true in all Cases, as well as in that of Alms-giving ; for the Heart is the Spring of all our Actions : And it is as hard for Charity to take its due course and scope, where the Bowels are shut up, as for a River to run, where the Fountain is quite dried up : Rocks many times yield a Stream, but a Stony Heart never ; to be sure, not that Liberal Supply of any kind, which the Necessities of miserable Objects call for. Therefore those Old Philosophers were cruelly mistaken, who, though they were for outward Offices of Humanity ; yet thought it unbecoming Reasonable Natures, and inconsistent

sistent with a Man's Happiness, to be moved with Compassion in the Mind, and to be pierced with a sense of another's Misfortunes. This is to commit a Rape upon all Mankind; to Ravish them of their Bowels. Nay, it doth not only stifle the very Principle of Charity, but it prepares a way too, for the greatest Injustice and Oppression: For how can he stick at any thing, though never so hard, that hath no sense of it? As long as the Affliction toucheth not himself, he feels no more his Neighbour's Smart; though he himself gives the blow, than a Flint, or an Adamant; and at such Hands neither is Mercy nor Justice to be expected. This was one great Reason, why the Son of God was pleased to take Human Nature upon him; that he might
infill
be

be sensible of those our common Miseries, whereof a Spirit is not capable of feeling. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, Heb. 2. 17. We have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our InfirmitieS, but was in all Points tempted* (that is, tried by Afflictions, acquainted with Sorrows and Griefs,) *like as we are, Hebr. 4. 15.* His own through-sense of the Hardships of the World, made him the more willingly go about doing good during his abode in the Flesh, and the more merciful to Mankind now, since all Power in Earth and Heaven hath been put into his Hands. And this will be in us the Principle of right Christian Charity to one another; to be pain-

110 *A Practical Discourse*

painfully affected with the Sufferings of others: And to this end we should use all possible means, to mould our Hearts rightly, to supple them into a very soft, tender, and compassionate Temper; and to let all moving Idea's sink deep into them, because we are the Body of Christ, and all of us Members of it, knit together by the same Ligaments of Faith and Hope; we should be all animated with the same Spirit of Charity too; we should have, as St. Paul speaks, *1 Cor. 12.25,26. The same Care one for another; so that if one Member suffer, all the Members should suffer with it.*

2. But, Secondly, This is not enough, if it be all. 'Tis poor kindness just to be troubled for
ano-

another, and to say, *God help him.* Grief, and Sorrow, and Anguish, and good Wishes, must break out into Action; else, all the rest is but good natur'd Compliment. The Laws of Charity bind us, not to be Barren, or Unfruitful, but to be full of Good Works, according as our own Capacities, and according as the Wants and Necessities of other People are.

First, To do their Souls all the Good we can. This is the noblest Work of Charity, because it is done to the noblest Part of Man: And because there is a necessity for the Soul, upon its parting from the Body, to pass into an Everlasting, Unchangeable State, either of Happiness, or Misery: Greater Charity there cannot be, than to minister such Helps and Means

112 *A Practical Discourse*

Means to it now, as serve to prepare it for a Blessed Eternity: As, to instruct it in the right sound Faith; to teach it the true Fear of God; to subdue its Sinful and Inordinate Lusts; and to bring it to an habitual Practice of all manner of Piety and Virtue. *He which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death,* Jam. 5. 20. Such a Man saveth several Souls at once; his Neighbour's, and his own too. A most Honourable Office certainly; the most Excellent Work, that is Crowned with a Reward so Glorious, so Infinite.

Secondly, Charity obligeth us to express a tender Regard to the Worldly Necessities of others also, according to our Abilities. God, who hath ordered all Things

in

in Number, Measure, and Weight, hath of his great Goodness and Wisdom, made variety of Conditions among Mankind, and hath so suited Men's Capacities, Fortunes, and Abilities, to their several States of Life, that every one is to be useful in some respect or other to the rest. And because no Man can possibly live alone, or support himself in a State of utter Separation from all others; Common Necessity ties us all together, like so many Limbs and Members into one Body, that each may minister its Assistance towards the Maintenance of the whole. Now so far as any one wants, and becomes feeble, so far it is disabled and hindred from lending its own help to its Fellows: So that were nothing else to be consider'd but the Preserva-
tion,

114 *A Practical Discourse*
tion, and common Interest of Hu-
mane Society, that alone would
be enough to set all Hands at
work, upon extending themselves
in Acts of Charity.

But our Obligations to it are
the greater still, because the Di-
vine Being, who careth for us all,
hath made that which is a Civil
Duty, to be a part of our Religion
too; that which the Necessities
of Humane Society call for, he
himself requires as necessary in
order to our Eternal Interest.
Upon both accounts therefore, as
we are Men, and Christians also,
we must be very careful to ex-
press the Benevolent Disposition
of our Hearts, by all outward
Acts of Beneficence, according
as our Stations and Capacities are,
and according as the Needs and
Sufferings of other People require
our

our helping Hand ; as, to save Life, when it is in danger ; to deliver Captives ; to relieve the Oppressed ; to take care of the Sick ; to help the Infirm ; to feed the Hungry ; to cloath the Naked ; to cherish the Comfortless ; to lift up the Head that hangeth down ; to visit the Fatherless and Widow in their Affliction ; and to send up to the God of Comfort , our Charitable Intercessions for all. It was a Pious and Noble Reflection, which *Job* made upon himself, in the midst of his own Distress, *Job 29.* from Vers. 11. to Vers. 18. *When the Ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the Eye saw me, it gave witness to me : Because I delivered the Poor when he cried, and the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to*

I 2 *perish,*

116 *A Practical Discourse*

perish, came upon me, and I caused the Widow's Heart to sing for joy. I put on Righteousness, and it cloathed me; my Judgment was a Robe, and a Diadem. I was Eyes to the Blind; and Feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause which I knew not, I searched out. And I brake the Jaws of the Wicked, and plucked the Spoil out of his Teeth.

Thirdly; Besides our doing Good to the Souls and Bodies of Men after this manner, we are bound to express our Charity by being kind to their Reputation also. Interest, Fortune, Comfort, Peace, Life it self, depends upon this; and it is the more necessary to be preserved with Care, because it is easie to be lost, and the hardest Thing to be recover'd.

Nay,

Nay, in some cases, the common Welfare, and the very Honour of God depends upon it too. For if the Persons, whose Credit is wounded, be placed in any publick Station either in Church, or State, it will be impossible for them, as long as the Wound remains, to do the World that Good, or God that Service, which is the end of their Office; and by this means the Blow striketh very deep, and affects in some measure the whole Community: And therefore for the Love of God and Man, we should always endeavour either to prevent, or heal. If the Persons reproach'd deserve it not, 'tis but Justice to be their Advocates; if they do, 'tis Charity however: But what ever it be to them, to be sure 'tis Charity to the Publick; and perhaps

an Effectual, as well as Charitable Way, to shame and reclaim the false Accusers themselves, whose business is, not to convince, or mend others, but to expose them. Besides, rarely doth any one's Reputation bleed, but the first Drop is drawn by those *Backbitings and Whisperings*, which St. Paul mentions, 2 Cor. 12. 20. by Artifices in private, where the greatest Innocence cannot stand upon the Defensive; and then 'tis like the breaking in upon the Dead, that cannot help themselves: In which case Common Charity should move every Man to be for a Rescue, Alas! even Crimes should be buried, and lie quiet in the Grave; because they cannot appear above Ground without Scandal,

V.

5. Having shew'd you that Office of *Charity*, which consisteth in Kindness, or in doing others Good in every respect, I proceed now to the next Character the Apostle gives of it; *Charity envyeth not*: That is, will not be disturbed or grieved at another's Happiness; or at any Thing, wherein another excels. The Scripture calls this Passion, *An Evil Eye*, Matth. 20. 15. And *Plutarch* compares it to a Disease in the Eye, by means whereof it cannot endure to behold any splendid or bright Object.

Of all the Distempers of the Mind, there is none that proceedeth from a worse, nor yet from a weaker Cause; for it is not

grounded upon any Personal Crime, but upon a Wicked Opinion of Partiality in Providence, and upon an Abusive Conceit of ones own Deserts. Where is any Injustice or Blame in the Man, if God pleaseth to bless him with outward or inward Gifts above his Neighbours? Yet this is the Original of Envy, that for Great and Wise Reasons, God doth dispense his Goodness to some with a more Liberal Hand, than what he extendeth unto others. And can any Thing be more wicked, than to quarrel with the Divine Being for his Bounty? Or can any Thing be more unreasonable, than to find fault with a Man, because he is happily made a Partaker of it? For Anger, and Hatred, and some other Vices, there might be some Tolerable Pre-

Pretence ; did not the Laws of Religion forbid them. This Vice is the most unfortunate of all, that it hath no Covering, but an Evil Heart.

But I am not now to consider so much the Unreasonable Nature of Envy, as how contrary and opposite it is to a Spirit of Charity ; for, whereas a Charitable Person wisheth well to all, and endeavours, as far as in him lies, to do Good to all ; the Envious Wretch grieves and pines, murmurs and complains, frets and rages at his Neighbour's Happiness. Such a Wretch is not so much as Charitable to himself ; because his great (I had almost said, his *only*) kindness is to a Vice, that is his cruellest Enemy ; to a Vice, that cuts and pierces him to the quick ; to a Vice that eats daily upon his

122 *A Practical Discourse*

Vitals, and into his Heart ; and in return for its Entertainment, gives him nothing but Gall and Wormwood. And how can it be expected, that a Man so *imbit-ter'd* should be Charitable to any other. *If you have Envying, and bitter Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lye not against the Truth. This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is Earthly, Sensual, and Devilish : For where Envying and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every Evil Work :* Jam. 3. 14, 15, 16. There is Meaness of Spirit, Covetousness, Detraction, Hatred, Lying, Malice, Fraud, Oppression, Partiality, Cruelty, and too often Blood-guiltiness it self. The first Blood that ever was shed upon the Earth, was shed out of meer Envy ; because *the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his Offer-
ing,*

ing, Gen. 4. 4. Yet how was it a Crime in *Abel*, or why was he to be blamed, that God loved him?

An Envious Spirit being so inconsistent with Charity, so repugnant to it, so utterly destructive of it, we should use all possible means to pluck out of our Souls this poisonous Root of Bitterness: Then shall we be Charitable indeed when we unfeignedly desire, not only the Eternal, but even the Temporal Prosperity of all Men, and strive according to our Ability to Promote it. Then shall we express our Charity indeed, when we seek not our own only, but consider the Cases, and suit ourselves to the Circumstances of others, as if they were our own too; when we bless God for them, and are satisfied and pleased

to

to see our Neighbours sit at Peace under their Vines, delighted and cheerful with their Milk and Honey about them. Then are we Charitable to all Men, when instead of fretting against any, we take Compassion upon the worst, lamenting and pitying their In felicities, as well as Sin, when they abuse and misapply the Mercies of God to them. Then are we Charitable indeed, when we rejoice for those Gifts which the Divine Bounty bestows, especially upon Good Men; when we are Thankful for them, and make this Christian Use of them, as to become our selves the Wiser and Better for them. Then are we Charitable indeed, when we are contented with our own present Portion, and satisfied with other Men's, entirely submitting to the Will

Will of God, with this comfortable Perswasion, That in the several Acts of his Providence to them and us, he doth that which is best for us all; if not that which we most Covet, yet that which we most Need. Briefly, to Acquiesce in his Goodness and Wisdom, considering how much we Enjoy above what we really deserve, how many Thousands that deserve as well come vastly short of us, and how little short we our selves comparatively come of those who deserve better; to put a due value upon every the least Blessing of God, and with all modest Resignation to leave our selves, our Fortunes, and our Brethren, to his Government and Disposal: This is at once to be Wise, Patient, Pious, and Charitable also.

VI.

16. The next Character which St. Paul gives of *Charity*, as a Rule for us to express it by, is not so readily understood as the former, because it admits of various Interpretations: The Expressions which the Apostle useth, is no where else to be found in the Holy Scripture. Very probably it is a *Latin* word made *Greek*, as some other words in the New Testament are, and therefore it is no wonder, if it bears a very doubtful Sense; especially considering, that it is no very common Word among the Old *Latines* neither: *Ou μεμπενειν*, is the Expression; which our Translation rendreth, *Doth not vaunt it self*: But this is included in the following Character of Cha-

Charity, that is, it is not puffed up,

If that Construction be right which Dr. *Hammond* mentions (though without any Credit) out of *Phavorinus*, it should be rendered thus, Charity *flattereth not*; and certainly Flatterers are the most Uncharitable People in the World; for they carry a Feather in their Hands with a design to do *soft Execution*, and therefore are to be avoided as base and cursed Fellows, as Destroyers and Pests, saith *Plutarch*, (*De Lib. Educ.*) To which purpose, that wise Heathen hath written a large Discourse; (*Plut. de Adul. & Amici. Discrimine.*)

Some Divines render the Apostle's Expression thus, Charity is not *Inconstant*; Others, Charity is not *Pretending, Feigned, and Hypocritical*;

128 *A Practical Discourse*
poetical; in which serje, *Clemens*
Alexandrinus and *St. Basil* seem to
agree.

There are no less than nine or ten Interpretations of the Phrase: But the fairest, and that which is most followed by the Learned, is that of *St. Chrysostom* and *Fertulian*; Charity is not *Precipitant*; or, a Charitable Person doth not run headlong; doth not act rashly, boisterously, and without due consideration.

That Noble Faculty the Understanding, being planted in the Soul by Almighty God, to direct us in all Cases; Reason ought to be the Principle and Rule of our Moral Actions: We should first propose to our selves a good End in all our Undertakings, and then make choice of such good Means, as right Reason tells us are fit and proper

proper for the attaining it. Unless we do manage our selves thus considerately, we do not act like Rational Beings, but like Madmen, Fools, and Brutes.

Therefore when we are about to deal with one another, we should strictly Examine before-hand, Whether the End we drive at be Charitable, or consistent with our Neighbours Good and Welfare; and whether the Means we would use be Charitable in like manner. For if either the End, or the Means, be contrary to the Law of Charity, the Action it self must needs be very sinful, and defile the Conscience; and therefore it should be well weighed and considered before-hand. Men should not do Things, especially Things of this Nature, in an hurry; nor suffer their Pas-

sions to carry them violently on, before Right Reason hath had Audience; because when an Action is done hand over head, it is a very great Chance if it be not Evil. The Thing Intended may be Evil, for ought the Man knows; for he considers it not; and the course he takes to bring it about, may be Evil too, and seldom is an Action unadvisedly done, but it is so: And then Mischiefs unavoidably follow, and some too that perhaps were not designed at the first. 'Tis St. *Chrysoftom*'s Observation, That Charity makes one Prudent, Cautious, Grave, and Condescending, and by bringing the Mind to Temper and Thoughtfulness, preventeth Rash and Injurious Proceedings. But if Spleen make head against Reason, and Inconsideration gets the Mastery, Power

Power strikes at every Thing that stands in the way, which in that case is as a Knife in the Hand of a Mad-man.

Therefore in the whole inter-course of those Offices, which usually pass between Man and Man, we should deliberate about our Actions in good time; and how Alluring soever any Thing appears, we should narrowly look into the Nature of it, in stead of viewing the Face; and consider thoroughly first, whether it be Just, then whether it be Charitable also, consistent with that Goodness and Kindness of Mind which becomes a Christian. If the Thing be contrary to the Law of Love, and such as we would not have another to do to our own selves, we must with a very quick Hand lay the Bridle upon our Passions, lest

the Beast should prove Heady, and by running away with us at all adventures, rush us headlong into a great many Sins. We should sit down a while and consider, how short our Life is at the best, and what little time in comparison we have to do Good in the World ; and how suddenly many drop into the Grave, before they have done any at all. We should consider, what base Vices Hatred and Malice are ; what Dishonourable and Wicked Purposes they tend to ; what Mean and Hellish Arts Men are driven to, for the putting of them in execution ; what Disorders they make in the World ; how Prejudicial they are to the Interest of Mankind, to the Peace and Comfort of Humane Life ; and what Irreparable Mischiefs arise from them naturally,

rally, not only to Single Persons, but to Bodies, to Families, to Publick Societies, nay to the whole Church and State, when once they come to break out, as very often they do, into Epidemical Outrage. We should consider too, what Rewards they bring to the Actors themselves, after all these Dreadful Consequences ; Vexation and Anguish of Spirit, a Polluted Conscience, a lost Credit, an abbreviated Life, and instead of any solid Satisfaction in the Course, or at the End of it, Eternal Damnation at last, both of Soul and Body. What Fruit will Men have then of those Things, whereof they ought even now to be Ashamed ? I am perswaded, if People would but Deliberate thus before-hand, and suffer their Minds kindly to enter-

tain these, or some of these Considerations, it would be impossible for half so much Folly and Storm to be in the World: Such an excellent way this is, not only to express, but to encrease Men's Charity to one another, and to keep them from tumbling precipitously into a vast Complication of Wickednesses and Misfortunes, which one day Uncharitable Wretches will repent of; tho' perhaps not till it be too late; till they have Sinned the time of their Peace away.

VII.

7. The next Character of Charity is, that it *is not Puffed up*; alloweth not People to be Proud and Arrogant, to be Haughty and Supercilious, to have an immodest, lofty,

lofty, and over-high Conceit of a Man's own self; or to behave himself with Contempt and Scorn towards those, whom he looks down upon at a distance as his Inferiors.

There is hardly another Vice that is more Foolish, more Hateful, than Pride is; none that is so like to the Devil's Temper; I am sure, none that stands in more direct opposition to all the Laws of Charity. An humble Mind stoops to all, though the meanest and lowest Offices; nor is there any Act of Love, which it is not willing to reach out a kind Hand unto, though it be to the washing of Feet: And the Reason is, because a truly humble Man hath so modest an Opinion of himself, and so high an Esteem of others, that he is apt to reckon all good

Offices to be a kind of Debt to them, and a very necessary, though a poor Tribute of Honour to the Meek and Lowly Jesus. But Pride sets Men so remote from their Neighbours, that to *desire* their Friendship, looks like Incroachment; and for themselves to *offer* it, seems to them a Transgressing the Rules of Greatness; and so in that distance and interval between *State* and *Meanness*, many Acts of True Charity are wanting, many Blessed Opportunities of doing Good drop to the Ground, and are quite lost, and perhaps too when the Necessities of Poor Wretches are most pressing. Seldom do Proud Men think of God himself, *They care not for God, neither is God in all their Thoughts*, saith *David*, Psal. 10. 4. They think not of him as their Maker and

and Benefactor, by whom they live; or as their Law-giver and Judge, by whom they must be Sentenced to Eternity; at least they think not with that Gratitude, Reverence, and depth of Thought, which should swallow up all their vain Imaginations. And if God be not in their Minds, it is no wonder if Men be not there, and if they be full of nothing but Themselves. But this is not all: The Case would be better though they did no Good, if they did no Hurt neither. But Pride is such an Injurious and Imperious Vice, that where it Ruleth, it admits of no Bound but those of its own setting, and those are as uncertain, as precarious Priviledges under an Arbitrary Power. Pride commonly hath Covetousness for its Factor, to Toil and Drudge for its

its Maintenance; and when those Vices go hand in hand, nothing is safe that is within reach, though it be *Naboth's Vineyard*. *Ahab* was sick at Heart for it, and to recover his Content, the Poor Man's Blood was sought for too, as the speediest Remedy. Men of such Tempers are so bloated with an Opinion of their own Deserts, that they fancy themselves to have a kind of Right to every Thing, especially if it be judged necessary and convenient; and how then can we hope for Charity, when there is no room for Justice? Fraud, Rapine, and Oppression, are the usual designs of an elated Mind, and 'tis the harder to stop them, because Proud People are ever apt to over-look their Actions; think it a Diminution to obey such a Thing as Conscience;

science; are too Big to be taken to account; too High to ask themselves; is there not Iniquity in my Right Hand?

Indeed People who are thus puffed up, have not always power to hurt others much in their Fortunes; but then they seldom fail to oppress them in their Fame; which is another Thing utterly inconsistent with that Candor and Goodness, which evermore attends a Charitable Temper. Pride is always very Censorious; though many times there is no other Reason for the hard Character it gives, but this only, That it may have a Foil, to set off it self. The greatest Innocence is often Reproached, because Proud People care not what others deserve, but would have you know how Singular their own Merits are; by expo-

its Maintenance; and when those Vices go hand in hand, nothing is safe that is within reach, though it be *Naboth's Vineyard*. *Ahab* was sick at Heart for it, and to recover his Content, the Poor Man's Blood was sought for too, as the speediest Remedy. Men of such Tempers are so bloated with an Opinion of their own Deserts, that they fancy themselves to have a kind of Right to every Thing, especially if it be judged necessary and convenient; and how then can we hope for Charity, when there is no room for Justice? Fraud, Rapine, and Oppression, are the usual designs of an elated Mind, and 'tis the harder to stop them, because Proud People are ever apt to over-look their Actions; think it a Diminution to obey such a Thing as Conscience;

science ; are too Big to be taken to account ; too High to ask themselves ; is there not Iniquity in my Right Hand ?

Indeed People who are thus puffed up, have not always power to hurt others much in their Fortunes ; but then they seldom fail to oppress them in their Fame ; which is another Thing utterly inconsistent with that Candor and Goodness, which evermore attends a Charitable Temper. Pride is always very Censorious ; though many times there is no other Reason for the hard Character it gives, but this only, That it may have a Foil, to set off it self. The greatest Innocence is often Reproached, because Proud People care not what others deserve, but would have you know how Singular their own Merits are ; by expo-

140 *A Practical Discourse*

exposing a Neighbour, they hope you will think the better and the more highly of them: By throwing Dirt upon others Faces, they think their own will appear the more Beautiful; like the haughty *Pharisee* in the Gospel, who thought to Recommend himself to God, by making Reflections; *I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, nor even as this Publican*, Luke 18. 11.

By this Injurious and Uncharitable Practice, many Mischiefs befall Mankind; as Strife, Railings, Animosities, Violence, and all manner of Outrage. So that *Salomon* saith, *Prov. 13. 10. Only by Pride cometh Contention.* 'Tis the only Natural Mother of Contention: There are Accidental Causes of it, as Drunkenness, Passion, Revenge, and the like, which bring

bring forth Strife upon preceding Heats and Provocations; but Pride is the only Vice, that hath a constant, natural Inclination that way; a Principle that tends to Strife, whether there be just Provocations or no; the Vice that loves it, and delights in it; and indeed that Signalizeth it self chiefly by it; for had we not Reason to beware of Quarrels, and ~~to~~ be afraid of them, for the mischievous Nature and Consequence of them, very little notice would be taken of Proud People; they would be the most Slighted and Scorned, as now they are the most Hated Creatures in the World.

Therefore that we may beget in us a right Spirit of Charity, and be able duly to express it, we should Learn of our great Law-giver and Exemplar, to be very
lo.ry

lowly in Heart ; Matth. 11. 29.

We should first lay our selves low under an awful Apprehension of God's Greatness, and under a just Sense of our own Vileness and Unworthiness, to be sure in comparison of Him ; of whose Perfections and Glory there is no End. Then we should consider, with what admirable Wisdom God hath ordered the World ; that as all Things depend upon him, so under him one Thing dependeth upon another, and ministreth Help to another ; and in this respect or that one Thing *excelleth* another too : That Man himself, though he struts upon the Earth with such Pomp and State, is beholding to the meanest Creature for Succour and Assistance : That the most Valuable Things any Man hath are all borrowed, and that but

but for a little time too. That though the Righteous be more Excellent than his Neighbour, yet it is God that makes the difference, and that we have nothing of our own but our Follies and our Sins. Few think it reasonable to be proud of these; and because all the rest are Debts, there is no reason for any to be proud of them neither. Upon these accounts we should prick the Bubble in our Minds, which hath nothing in it but Air, nothing about it but Phantastical Gaiety, to please Children and Fools. The business of a *Man* is to do Good; and in order thereunto, we should *Prefer one another in Honour*, Rom. 12.10. *Condescend to Men of low Estate*, Vers. 16. *Do nothing through Strife or Vain-glory*, but in lowliness of Mind each should esteem other better than

than themselves, Philip. 2. 3. Because how great soever one Man's Gifts may be, those of the most inferior Rank have in some respect or other greater Gifts than he hath. Briefly we should imitate the great *Humility* of the Lord Jesus, as a sure way of expressing his great *Charity* too ; who though He was in Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be Equal with God, yet made himself of no Reputation. As he laid aside his Glory for the Form of a Servant ; so he laid aside his Garments for the lowest Ministration , to wash the Feet of his Disciples with those most holy Hands, which had wrought so many Miracles, nay to wash the Feet of *Judas* himself, that was now going to betray him. But I shall speak no more at present of this

this Virtue, *Humility*, because it will require a particular Discourse by it self.

VIII.

8. The Eighth Character of *Charity* is, That it doth not behave it self *Unseemly*; doth nothing to others that is *Indecent*, *Foul*, or *Unsuitable*, to the Excellence and Honour of Christ's Religion.

One great Reason is, because disorderly and disgraceful Actions are not only Evil in their own Nature, but are Evil in their Effects, Scandalous and very Hurtful in their Consequences; they carry a strong Infection with them, which is of Evil Operation; they serve to taint the Minds, and corrupt the good Manners of other People, that behold them;

I. and

and so are apt to draw a great many more to the Practice of them. This is that which the Scripture meaneth, when it speaks of *making Men to Sin*; of *laying a Stumbling-Block* in their way; of *wounding their Consciences*; of *Offending*; and *giving Offences*; as those two wicked Sons of *Eli* did, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, when they abused Women in that shameful manner, 1 *Sam.* 2. And so it is always, when People are allured into the Communion of any Guilt; when they are encouraged and tempted to do an Evil Thing by seeing others do it. Nothing is more Natural than Imitation, especially in bad Things. Such is the Corruption of our Nature, that every one is of a soft, waxy Disposition on that side, apt to receive deeper Impressions from one ill

ill Example, than from many good ones. There is a Contagion in Vice, which insensibly goes from one to another, till the Disease becomes General. A Disorderly Master teacheth his whole Family Licentiousness and Irreligion. An Unjust, Malicious, and Dissolute Neighbour, is a Plague to a whole Society, and shews others the way how to be so too. A Seditious Subject emboldens many more to disturb the Publick Peace; and one Factious Preacher is enough to raise Animosities, Quarrels, and Schisms in a whole Church; when once the Infection spreads, God knows where it will end; the Sin and Mischief runs on, and is still propagated with the Example.

Upon this account every Scandalous and Shameful Action is

utterly Repugnant to the Rule of Charity, because it is Injurious, and Injurious in the highest degree; Injurious to the Souls of Men, to those Precious and Immortal Spirits of Men, for which the Lord Jesus was pleased of his own meer Goodness and Charity to die. This is a Sin of a very high Nature, a *Sin against Christ*, saith St. Paul, *1 Cor. 8. 12.* that doth after a more peculiar manner, and with a particular sort of Spear, wound that infinite Lover of Souls.

For the opening this Matter a little further, it will be very useful for us to consider two famous Cases, that were in the beginning of Christianity, even in the Days of the Apostles. Then there were two hot Controversies in the Church; and it is observable, that in

in each Case the Controversie was about a Thing that was purely indifferent ; no particular Law, whether from the Nature of the Thing, or from God, or from the Church, binding People to act the one way or the other : And yet in both Cases, Charity was the great General Rule, which the Apostles ordered Men to go by, for fear of tempting others into Sin ; which plainly shews, that to give a Scandalous Example, by any shameful or foul Action, is a most abominable Practice.

The first Case related to those *Jews*, who were newly brought over to Christianity. Many of them were so weak in their Faith, so uninstructed as yet in the Doctrine of Christian Liberty, that they thought it still necessary for

L 3 them

150 *A Practical Discourse*

them to observe the old Jewish Sabbath, and other Solemn Days, which *Moses* had appointed, and to abstain totally from some sorts of Meats, which had been forbidden by *Moses*: Others again made no scruple about these Things, but look'd upon those Days and Meats as Indifferent now under the Gospel; and accordingly they used their Christian Liberty as to both. Now though St. *Paul* gave this Rule to each Party, *Rom. 14.3.* *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth.* Yet the Apostle seems most inclined (as Charitable Men are apt to be) to the weaker side; and that Charity might have the casting Hand in the whole Controversie. He directed those who were thoroughly Instructed, not to use

use their full lawful Liberty in the presence of a weak Brother, lest he should be tempted, either to do as others did, though against his Conscience, or else to forsake the Christian Communion; either of which would have been a deadly Sin. Judge this, (saith the Apostle) that no Man put a stumbling Block, or an occasion to fall, in his Brother's way, Rom. 14. 13. And again, If thy Brother be grieved (or scandalized) by thy Meat, now walkest thou not Charitably; destroy not him with thy Meat, for whom Christ died, V. 15. And again, For Meat destroy not the Work of God; all Things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that Man who eateth with Offence. It is good neither to eat Flesh, nor to drink Wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak; V. 20, 21. L 4 The

The other Case related to those Proselytes, who had been brought over to Christianity from Heathenism. Whereas there was an old General Custom among the Heathens, to eat part of those Sacrifices, which had been offered to their supposed Deities, many of them, though they had received the Christian Faith, continued this Custom nevertheless ; believing still, that the Things they worshipped were Real Beings, and that they themselves were better by much for partaking of those their Sacrifices. Others knew, that these were grossly mistaken ; and were convinced, that those Idols were nothing but Fictitious and Imaginary Deities : However these too resorted to the Idol-Feasts for Compliance-sake,

sake, yet believing them not to be Religious, but ordinary Friendly Meals. Now this was a very Shameful and Evil Practice: For though the eating of those Meats, abstractedly and simply considered, was a Thing indifferent, yet the Scandal it gave, made it utterly unlawful, because it was a Violation of Charity; it confirmed others in their old Heathenish Opinion, and encouraged them to go on still in their old Heathenish sinful Course. To rectifie this Matter therefore, St. *Paul* discourses in *1 Cor. 8.* shewing, that though he and others had a very vile Opinion of the Heathen-Idols, yet it was a most shameful and wicked thing to lay a stumbling Block in their Brethren's way, (that is the Expression again;) that is, to Minister unto

unto them any occasion of falling into, or of continuing in a sinful Practice. *Meat commendeth us not unto God*; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse. *But take heed, lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a stumbling Block to them that are weak.* For if a Man see thee, who hast knowledge, sit at Meat in the Idols Temple, shall not the Conscience of him that is weak, be embolden'd to eat those Things which are offered to Idols? And through thy knowledge shall the weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died? Vcrs.8,9,10,11. And at the close of that Chapter he declared his own Peremptory Resolution; *That if Meat made his Brother to offend, he would eat no Flesh while the World stood, lest he should make his Brother to offend.*

Here

Here then is a noble Rule of Charity for us all to go by, *viz.* To be very careful that we do not at any time encourage others to do Evil, by our Indecent and Scandalous Examples in any case: Not so much as in the use of Things purely Indifferent, much less by doing Things that have a Moral and Natural Turpitude in them: Such Things are of a most shameful Nature, and of very dangerous Consequence; and therefore we should always beware of them, lest we be answerable for other Men's Blood and Ruine, as well as our own.

St. *Chrysostom* understands the Apostle thus, Charity is *not ashamed*, and he instanceth in our Blessed Saviour, who was not at all ashamed; when the Harlot washed his Feet with Tears, and wiped

wiped them with the Hairs of her Head, kiss'd his Feet, and anointed them ; nor when he was spit upon and abused by base Fellows, nor when he carried a Thief and Murderer with him into *Paradise*. The meaning of that great Man is, That true Charity doth not permit one to do a foul Thing, a Thing which he hath just Reason to be ashamed of. The Lord Jesuſ did all Things with a Charitable Purpose, and to Charitable Ends : And we that are his Followers, should follow him in this, To win as many Souls to him as we can, in stead of Discouraging or Offending any ; to gain all that are about us, at least to endeavour it. This is Christian Charity indeed, to become ones Brother's Keeper ; to lift him himſelf out of the Pit, whatever becomes

comes of his Ox or Ass ; to save his Soul from Death ; to be tenderly concerned for that Immortal Part ; to Convert him from the Error of his Way ; to take him up like a wandring Lost Sheep upon the Shoulders ; and by a Good Example and Charitable Directions, to shew him the Way to Everlasting Life.

IX.

9. The Reason why Charity requires these and the like Offices at our hands is, because it is a publick-spirited Grace. And that is another noble Character the Apostle gives of a Charitable Person, that he *seeketh not his own* ; not his own Private Advantage only, but the Profit of others too ; and especially the good of the

the whole Community, to which he stands related. This is included in the very Notion of Charity; for it is a kind, benevolent Disposition, that makes us lend an helping hand, wherever it is wanting. The truth is, this is Charity to ones self too, as well as to others, if you consider the Matter rightly. That we may be tied, and linked, and bound close together by mutual Love and Kindness, God hath so ordered the State of this World, that all Men have a necessary Dependance one upon another; nor would there be such a shiftless, pitiful, miserable Creature in the World as a Man, were he to live alone, and by himself. Every one of us stands in need of the Society and Help of others, as much as we need Food or Air. He needs
the

the Magistrate, to Protect him under God; the Statesman, to Consult and Advise for him; the Divine, to Instruct him; the Tradesman, to Supply him with a World of Necessities; the Soldier, to Fight for him; the painful Husbandman, to find him Bread; the poor Servant, to Work and Sweat for him; nay, the Greatest and Richest Man on Earth needs the very Beggar to do him good too: He needs even the Blind, and the Lame; the Hungry, and Naked; the comfortless Mother, and her sucking Child: For what? Why to lay up his Treasure in Heaven for him; for these are God's Receivers; by their Hands it is that Men lend unto the Lord, that they may receive themselves Ten thousand fold at the hands of Christ.

Christ. Every one's Good is lodged more or less every where, just as his Necessities are; some part in one hand, some in another; and the greatest part in the Common Good, in the joint Stock of the Community, in the Prosperity and Good of the whole Kingdom. 'Tis a great mistake for a Man to think, that all his Interest lieth at Home, in his Family, and in Himself, and within the compass of his own Propriety. There indeed lieth his particular and private Interest: But what is that worth, if his publick Interest be destroyed? If the Welfare of the whole Nation be destroyed, and gone? Every Man's particular Happiness is bound and wrapt up in that, and depends on that; nor is it possible for the Body to suffer, but each Member must suffer.

suffer in proportion: And hence it follows, that he is a Fool, as well as an ill Neighbour, that seeks his own private Welfare only, neglecting and overlooking the Common Good, which is the main, and which Supports and Preserves all the rest. It is sinful Self-Love that looks at Home only, and is busie altogether within its own Walls. The Office of Charity is to look abroad; to see how the Publick fares; to consult and mind the publick Good; to lend a helping Hand in all publick Necessities; and with all possible care to avoid every Thing that is directly Injurious to the Common Happiness, and destructive of it.

To express our Charity therefore in this respect also, as every one should seek not his own, but another's

ther's Wealth, 1 Cor. 10. 24. So all of us are obliged after an especial manner, to study and provide for the *Peace* of the Society, whereunto we all belong. *Peace* is the greatest Happiness upon Earth; as it is the State of Heaven; the Blessing that gives a Relish to all the rest; that makes all other Enjoyments sweet and delightful; and for that Reason the Holy Scripture is wont to express all manner of Happiness by the General Name of *Peace*. To destroy or disturb this, is to be a publick Enemy; and where a Spirit of Contention reigneth and striveth, the War must be very dangerous to the whole Body, because it is in the Bowels. 'Twere better living in a Desert, and to wait for ones Food, as *Elijah* did, by the ministry of Ravens, than

than with a Generation of People, that are Enemies to Peace; Restless, Froward, Troublesom, Malicious, ready for any opportunity to vex and Scourge one another. In such a case, Society, which should be ones great Comfort, is his greatest Plague, for Men are thereby the stronger to hurt him; Spleen works till it raiseth a Confederacy, and then Mischiefs run with an Inundation; like Calamities in a Civil War, where Force carries it, and Armed Enemies consider not what they shalld, but what they can do.

To prevent the Plagues of this Life, as well as the Torments of another; the Laws of the most Holy and Charitable Jesu require us to be *Peacemakers*. Matth. 5. 9. To live in Peace, 2 Cor. 13. 11.

164 A Practical Discourse

To follow Peace with all Men,
Hebr. 12. 14. To seek Peace, and
ensue it, 1 Pet. 3. 11. To keep the
Unity of the Spirit, in the bond of
Peace, Eph. 4. 3. If it be possible,
as much as lieth in us, to live peace-
ably with all Men, Rom. 12. 18.
And, To follow after the Things that
belong to our Peace, Rom. 14. 19.
And certainly, if it be Charity to
wish others, and to do others all
the Good we can, it must be the
greatest Charity to seek that
which is the best Thing in the
World for them, in what Capac-
ties soever we consider them, whe-
ther as Inhabitants of the Neigh-
bourhood, or as Members of a
Church, or as constituent Parts of
a whole Kingdom; and when our
Charity is thus Large and Exten-
sive, it will in some measure re-
semble the Goodness of God,
whose

whose Mercy is over all this
Works.

1. First, We are to express our
Charity, by seeking and ensuring
Peace in the Neighbourhoods we
belong to. How great a Com-
fort is it when Neighbours sit
quietly and contentedly under
their Vines and Fig-trees, Loving
and Kind to one another, each
reaching out his Clusters to the
rest, all rejoicing together in the
Innocent and Friendly Participa-
tion of God's Mercies; and all
Blessing God for them? What a
Good, what a Beautiful, what a
Delightful Thing it is, when Peo-
ple thus dwell together in Love,
Unity, and Peace? What an Hea-
venly State is this, in comparison
of their wretched Condition, a-
mong whom Envy and Strife

M 3 rageth;

rageth ; where Hatred seeketh continually, how it may Grieve and Oppress, where *Ishmael's* Hand is against every Man, and every Man's Hand against him ? Where one Tormenteth another, as if there were not Crosses enough in the World, but they must make new ones to Crucifie one another ? Is this consistent with the Nature and Laws of Charity ? Is this to be Long-suffering, to be Kind ? To behave our selves seemly, and as it becometh Brethren ? Is this to love our Neighbours as our selves ? And to love one another, as our Blessed Saviour hath loved us ? No, no ; there is no more Charity in this, than there is in Hell. If we bite and devour one another, whom do we resemble but that wicked One, who was a Murderer from the beginning ?

If

If ye have bitter Envying and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lye not against the Truth. This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is Earthly, Sensual, and Devilish. For where Envying and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every Evil Work. But the Wisdom that is from above is, first Pure, then Peaceable, Gentle, easie to be Intreated, full of Mercy, and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie: Jam. 3. 14, 15, 16, 17.

2. We must express our Charity also, by an orderly and peaceable Temper, as to Church-Communion; not seeking our own Satisfaction, our own Ends, our own Ways, but the General Good of that Mystical Body, whereof Christ is the Head.

Seeing it is impossible to order all Church Matters so, as to answer the Opinion, and to gratifie the Desires of every individual Member, Charity should teach us all to consider, whether the Circumstances which vary from our own private Fancies, be not really for the Publick Good, for the Common Profit, and in some measure and respect for the Common Peace and Edification of the whole Body. This is easie to be seen, if Men would attentively behold the whole Structure, and examine the Usefulness of the several Parts; especially if they would consider Things with Hearts prepared to make Candid and Charitable Constructions. Charity alone would stifle many Hot Controversies, without the use of some other Arguments, which for the most part help to

Fan the Fire, in stead of Quenching of it. In lesser Matters, where my own Judgment chanceth to differ from the Publick Judgment of my Superiors, Charity should teach me to submit my Private Sentiments, and set them aside from being an hindrance to Unity and Peace.

Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God, saith St. Paul; Even as I please all Men in all Things, not seeking my own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved; 1 Cor. 10. 32, 33. He had a most difficult Task (though he was an Apostle) to please all Men in all Things: But his meaning is, that he took a ready way to please them if it were possible; by suiting himself to them in every thing he could do for

170 *A Practical Discourse*
for them without Sin. And thus
are we bound in Charity to our
Fellow-Christians, and in Duty to
the Church of God, as far as it
lieth in our power to Comply
in all Things, especially in Things
Established by Publick Authority:
Because differences in Religion are
highly Scandalous, hurtful greatly
to the very Souls of Men; ac-
companied with a world of Ran-
cour and Uncharitableness, and
always tending to Confusion, and
to all Evil Works, which naturally
go along with Schism from the
Church. Therefore for meer
Charity and Peace-sake (were
there nothing else) we should be
all of the same mind; and if un-
happily there be some difference
in our Conccts, we should never-
theless, whereunto we have alrea-
dy attained, all walk by the same
Rule,

Rule, all mind the same Thing, in hopes that in time, by some means or other, God will Reveal to us the Truth and Reasonableness of those Matters, about which we are as yet differently perswaded, *Phil. 3.* This is a sure Rule in such cases; *Hast thou Faith? have it to thy self before God, Rom. 14.22.* That is, rather than occasion the least Sin, or Scandal, or Mischief in the Church, keep thy Perswasion private if it be singular.

3. A Thing which we should be the more careful of, because Differences which begin in the Church, are commonly carried off into Corners; there to be fomented and ripened, till at last they break out into the State, and sometimes into the open Field, to the great Disturbance of the Peace

Peace and Government of a whole Kingdom. It is the Will of God, that *under Kings, and all that are in Authority, we should lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*, 1 Tim. 2. 2. And to this end we are commanded, to *study to be quiet, and to do our own business*, 1 Thess. 4. 11. Here then we must express our Charity in the third place; by seeking, not our own, but the General Good of the Civil, as well as Sacred Community, we belong to. Great are the Obligations which Nature it self hath laid upon Men to their Country; insomuch, that St. Paul *wish'd himself accursed from Christ for his Brethren, his Kinsmen according to the Flesh*, Rom. 9. 3. Meaning, not that he might be Eternally Damned, (that Charity, if yet it be true Charity, is unnatural,

ral, and too much even for a Christian,) but that he might be cut off from the Body of Christ here, and from all the present Priviledges of Christians; and if this were not enough, that he might be delivered up to Satan, in this World to inflict upon him all the Temporal Calamities he was capable of Suffering, Persecutions, Miseries of all sorts, Death it self, and whatsoever is most Grievous on this side Hell; if thereby he might become an Expiation for his Country-men. Like Zeal of Charity to that of Moses, *Exod. 32. 32.* where he prayed to God to forgive the Sin of his People; or, if not, to blot him out of his Book; That is, not out of the Book of Eternal Life, but out of the Book of this Life; that he might not behold the great

great Punishments which should come upon them. These two noble Instances of Charity shew, what Fervent Affections we ought to have for a whole Nation, that is, after a more peculiar manner, Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh; and how Passionately we should wish for, as well their Temporal, as Eternal Good; and consequently seek it, much rather than our own. A very Learned Casuist and Prelate of

Bishop Sander.
Cate of the En-
gagem. our own calls this, *Allegiance to our Country*; whence the Allegiance

we owe the Sovereign Prince ariseth Originally, because he is the Head of the whole Community: So that it is with respect to the whole, and in relation to the whole, that the Duty to him becomes necessary by the Laws of

Na-

Nature. And hence it follows, that Men's first Care should be, for the Peace and Prosperity of the Community, where the Original Reason of it lies. The Truth is, a Christian's Charity can hardly be extensive enough; Prince and People, and the whole World, ought to have a Share of it: Nor is any Thing more mean and unbecoming, (not to say Ir-religious) than a Narrow, Sordid, Hateful Spirit, which seeketh its own Private Good only.

10. Another Character of *Charity* that followeth now is, that it is *not easily Provoked*, or *highly Exasperated*. But having already spoken of it, I shall proceed to that which is next at hand; *it thinketh*

thinketh no Evil. Some Learned Divines think the Apostle's meaning to be, That Charity doth not permit a Man to *impute* another's Faults and Miscarriages to him; so as to *upbraid* him with them, and to *design* him *Evil*, or Hurt for them. And indeed this is a Virtue very becoming and suitable, to the Generosity of a Mind, that is truly Charitable and Great; and it is the more Laudable, because it is not very common. For such is the Temper of most People, that they Treasure up Provocations against a Time of Wrath, so that the Offender shall be sure to hear of them, and to smart for them another day. Nay, it often happens, that let a Man's Merits be never so considerable in other Respects, they are forgotten or disregarded for one distastful Action:

Action: No Allowance is made for Humane Infirmities, and divers Circumstances, which might well be pleaded in Abatement and Excuse of the Fault; but the Memory of it continues, and returneth still, like the Pains of an old Sore against foul Weather. All his Righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned so as to come into Account; but for that *one* thing wherein he hath sinned, he shall feel the weight of an Avenging Hand, whether he Repenteth and Retracteth or no; that is all one to the Uncharitable Person that meditateth Evil.

But with Submission to better Judgments, I conceive, this cannot be the Genuine Sense of St. *Paul* here; because it doth not come up to the Spirit and Height of this Christian Grace. Not to design

Mischief, though it be an Essential Part, yet it is no such great Commendation of that Charity which is properly *Christian*, for Heathens themselves, upon a Principle of common Virtue, and Humanity, have condemned all Mischiefous and Revengeful Intentions. And besides, this is a Thing, which hath already fallen under another Head, that relateth to the moderating of Anger: And to bring it in here again, would be Tautology; which we may be sure the Apostle did industriously avoid, especially where he Treateth after such a concise and distinct manner of the several Properties of Charity.

St. Chrysostom's Interpretation seems the most Apposite and Natural; that Charitable Men are not *Suspicious* of Evil Designs at every

every turn; are not Jealous-headed; are so far from working Evil themselves, that they are not apt to entertain a wicked *Mistrust* of others working Evil against them. A suspicious Temper must needs be contrary to true *Christian Charity*, because (as St. Chrysostom rightly observes) it is the Original of Anger, and consequently, the Original Cause of those manifold Mischiefs which follow that wild and outrageous Passion. Not only Families and Neighbourhoods, but whole Churches and Kingdoms also have suffered in an high degree, by reason of Jealousies; and those too sometimes very Unreasonable and Groundless.

Therefore to express our Charity in this respect too, we should always judge of Men with all

possible *Candour*; put as favourable Constructions as we can upon their Actions, and conceive such a kind Opinion of them, though the Action be somewhat hard, as we are wont to have of the Miscarriages of a Friend, which we are willing to call so many Slips, Errors, and Indiscretions only. "Every Thing (saith *Epicetus*) hath two Handles; " and ill-natur'd People are ever " more apt to lay hold of the " wrong one. When a Fault is done, they are ready strait to think, the Injury or Affront was intended, and that maliciously; whereas a Man of Thought, and Temper, and of a Christian Spirit, would take the Thing by the other Handle; and call it Human Weakness, or Inadvertency, or by some other such soft Name, which

which Charity might easily find out, to cover the Nakednes of a poor Man, like unto ones self. Sometimes indeed Malice cannot be hid under all its Pretences and Disguises. When a Man comes into *David's* condition, who speaking of his Enemies, saith, *They have privily laid a Net, to destroy me without a cause. False Witnesses rose up, and laid to my Charge Things that I knew not. They whisper together against me. Their Words were smoother than Oyl, and yet they be very Swords. They daily mistake my Words; all that they imagine is to do me Evil: They hold all together, and keep themselves close; and mark my Steps. They encourage themselves in Mischief, and commune among themselves, how they may lay Snares. They have Rewarded me Evil for Good, and*

Hatred for my Good Will; and the like. I say, where there is such Overt Acts, the inward Wickedness is plain and palpable; and yet even in such a case there must be Charity, though mix'd with Cau-
tion; *The Wisdom of the Ser-
pent*, with the Innocence of the Dove. But till the blackness of the Heart appears clearly, we must not judge of Men with such Severity, as if we had God's Om-
niscience, and were able to disco-
ver the Malignity of the very In-
tention. Favourable and candid
Interpretations from Unsuspicous
Hearts, are always the safest and
best; and the true way to bring
us all to that Temper is, to be
sincere and simple-minded our
own selves, as we would have all
others be; free from Arts, Guile,
or Sinister Purposes. For cer-
tainly,

tainly, none are so Jealous of other Men, as they who are Conscious to themselves of their own Guilt; they that Practice the Arts of Dissimulation, and Dishonesty; they that leave the plain and easie Methods of Sincerity, to deal in the Intricate Mysteries of Subtilty and Craft, without regard to a Good Conscience. In the most ancient Times, People for the most part deserved *Jacob's* Character; Plain Men; Honest and Good; Free and Innocent in their Conversation; Ingenuous in their Friendship; Open-breasted in their Promises; Faithful in their Contracts; without Evil Designs; without Hypocrisie. Fraud and Treachery, Lying and Tricking, increased in the World as the World degenerated, and as the Manners of Men became more

and more corrupt, and these brought on Evil Jealousies; and it was a sad Age when the Insidious and False Disposition of the *Jews* made our Saviour give his Disciples that Rule of Common Prudence, to *beware of Men*, Mat. 10. 17. In the first Ages of our Religion, it was the Noble Character of Christians, that they did Things in *Singleness of Heart*, in Sincerity, and Godly Simplicity; keeping the Mean between two Extreams, neither turning Simplicity into Folly, nor Prudence into Craft. And in those Times, Conscience was Law enough to them; they were not afraid, nor suspicious of one another, no more than some *Indians* are now, who use neither Sealing nor Signing in their Dealings with one another, unless the Dishonesty of some Chri-

Christians hath taught them of late the Necessity of taking such Securities. Where Men live innocently together, there cannot be suspicions of Evil, because there is no occasion for them; they have as little reason to be afraid of one another, as Parents formerly had to be afraid of their Children, when the Sin of Parricide was not so much as heard of in the World. The Laws which were made against it after a long Tract of Time, were shameful Monuments of some Children's Impiety: And so are Laws against Dishonesty now; Upbraidings of Corrupt Manners; Publick Testimonies of the World's Degeneracy; and of the Miseries of Mankind. For the Ends of Human Society are lost, where Truth and Simplicity of Mind fail; and that

that Confidence which supports Conversation and Commerce is gone, where Hearts and Tongues are of different Pieces ; where Civilities are Traps ; where Promises are only to draw Men in ; where a Smile is an Artificial Gloss upon a Treacherous Mind ; where Contracts are Methods of Oppression ; where fair Pretences are Flattering Ways of Robbing in the Dark ; and where shews of Friendship are to do the Work of an Enemy, but with greater Safety, and with more certain Success. Where there is such Falseness, such Hypocrisy, and Deceit, People must needs be as shy and fearful of each other, as if they were in danger of Wolves and Bears. And for the curing of all Jealousies, nothing is so necessary, as that Simplicity of Heart I am now speak-

speaking of; Sincere Meanings, Openness in Traffick, Plainness in Speech, Innocence in Society, Veracity in Expressions, Ingenuity in Promises, Fidelity in Covenants, Truth in Friendship, Honesty and Peaceableness in Designs, Sweetness in Behaviour, Good Nature in our Mutual Offices, and all other possible Expressions of a pure, harmless, and undisguised Religion: And this is the Great Work of Christian Charity.

XI.

11. The Eleventh Character of *Charity* is, that *it Rejoyceth not in Iniquity*: Which may admit of a Twofold Interpretation, and each very consistent with the other. The one is, That Charitable Men are far from taking Pleasure in the *Sins*

Sins and *Impieties* which a Neighbour committeth. The next is, That they are far too from being delighted in the *Calamities* which a Neighbour suffers by *another's* Iniquity. Whether St. *Paul* intended both these Things here, I cannot tell; perhaps he might mean both in a few Words: However, because both are great Properties of Charity, and the latter is not distinctly mentioned elsewhere in this Chapter, I shall here take occasion to speak something of both in their Order.

1. The first and most received Interpretation is, That *Charity* teacheth us, to be far from being Pleased and Delighted with the *Sins* and *Iniquities* we see other Men commit. There are some of that Base and Inhumane Disposition,

sition, that what to all Pious Souls is a Torment, and a kind of Hell, is to them a Paradise; to hear ill Things of other Men, especially of those they have no Kindness for; that they may have a colourable Pretence to Defame and Depress them, to bring them into Dangers, and to use them Contumeliously; and that they may render themselves the better Men (as they think) in the Esteem of the World. Such were those Jews, *Jer. 20. 10, I heard, saith the Prophet, the Defaming of many; fear on every side: Report, say they, and we will report it: All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him; and we shall take our Revenge on him.* Meaning, that they wish'd and sought for ways how to discover

cover some Miscarriages or other in him, that they might proceed against him, and punish him in the *Sanhedrim*. People of such a Temper are most highly Uncharitable, and resemble the very Devil, who makes it his busines to tempt Men to Sin, and delights to bring the greatest Evil upon us, the Hurt and Ruine of our Souls, nay, to have God himself Dishonoured by us.

A Spirit of Charity teacheth us to Grieve and Mourn at anothers Sins, though he be an Enemy; because every Soul God hath made, is Precious; and the more Precious, because it is Immortal; and its Case is thereby the sadder when it drops into the Pit, where the Worm dieth not, nor is the Fire to be quenched. This we should consider, and lay seriously to

to Heart, when we see or hear of any of those Iniquities ; Fornication, Adultery, Theft, Covetousness, Drunkenness, Revellings, Strife, Sedition, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, and the like ; of which St. Paul expressly tells us, *That they who do such Things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, Gal. 5. 21. None are so to be pitied as such Workers of Iniquity, how prosperous and flourishing soever their Condition may seem to be here ; even for that too they are to be pitied, because God setteth them in slippery Places ; and when they fall, they fall into Perdition, without God's immediate Help ; which yet he hath nowhere promised without their Repentance. And when Men are just going, Repentance is commonly too late, because it hath

no time to be fruitful, and is seldom true. Considering therefore that our own Charity to such will then be too late also, we should shew it them in time; do them Good while we have an Opportunity; while it is called to Day; while it is yet our Hour, and the Day of Salvation. Our Bowels should yern upon a Brother, as *Joseph's* did upon his Brother *Benjamin*, Gen. 43. and we should retire, as he did, into our Chamber, and weep there: Weep and Mourn for the Sin now acted, and earnestly Pray for the Pardon of it; and with the United Assistance of an Holy Example, Kind Reproofs, and Charitable Counsels, we should endeavour to recover the Miserable Wretch out of the Snares of the Devil; if peradventure God will be pleased to give him

him Repentance in time. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? Said that great Lover of Souls, St. Paul, 2 Cor. 11. 29. This is fervent Charity indeed, to be Passionately Afflicted, to be on a Fire, for the Crimes and Offences of others; 'tis like the Charity of the Tender-hearted Jesus, that melted him into Tears, when he beheld that perverse and bloody City; O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not, Luke 13. 34.

2. But (as I said) there is another Interpretation yet of these Words, *Rejoyceth not in Iniquity*:

O

It

It is St. Chrysostom's; and I like it the rather, because it is his; viz. That Charitable Men are far from Rejoycing at the *Calamity* of those that *Suffer*, especially that wrongfully *Suffer* by means of another's *Iniquity*. To Triumph and Dance upon a Ruined Neighbour, to Laugh at his Adversity, to express Delight, as those Men did at *David's Misfortunes*, *There, there, so would we have it*: This is a sore Evil, a very horrible Violation of Charity, which obligeth us to *Rejoyce with them that Rejoyce, and to Weep with them that Weep*, Rom. 12. 15. That is, to Sympathize with our Brethren in every State and Condition.

This carrieth its own Light with it. Now, for our Practice of this Matter, we must be careful to do two Things.

First,

First, We must construe the Dispensations of Providence after a fair and *kind* manner: This is not a Place or Time for *Rewards*; those are laid up for us in Heaven: The present Life is for Trials and Discipline, to Train us up; and to Prepare us for a Blessed Eternity; by such ways as God seeth best, and fittest for us: Many times Good Men fare Ill in this World, as well as the Bad; and sometimes worse; because in some cases they can do themselves and others much more Good by their Hardships, than it is possible for them to do by any other means. Therefore we should not look upon the ill Usages Men meet with here as Arguments, either of Displeasure in God, or of Wickedness in his poor Suffering Crea-

O 2 tures;

tures; But as so many Dispensations of God's Wisdom and Goodness, who acteth after his own way, which is always for the best. Consequently, to trample upon one in Distress, and to exult over him, as if he were out of the Divine Favour, because his Case is hard; is both Uncharitableness towards the Man, and Irreligion towards God too; whose Proceedings are always Wise and Good, though many times Mysterious, till the Event opens the Meaning of them, God doth nothing in vain. As he is Good, and never grieves the Children of Men, but for good Purposes; so he is Just and Righteous too, and never spares the Workers of Iniquity but for good Purposes also: For their Repentance, if they will be led to it; if not, for the full mani-

manifestation of their Sins, and for his own Honour and Glory in the end, by making them Examples to the World. *Therefore, saith our Apostle, judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of Darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts; and then shall every Man have Praise of God,* 1 Cor. 4. 5.

The Second Thing we are to be careful of is, To *help* those who want the Assistance of Charitable Hands; those that Suffer by the *Hand of Iniquity*; those that are Oppressed with Wrong. When the Apostle saith, *Charity rejoiceth not in Iniquity*, or in Men's Sufferings by Iniquity, there is much more intended, than what is Literally express'd. Charitable

Men must shew their Grief for those Sufferings, by *Relieving* and *Aiding* the Sufferers. Prosperity hath Friends enough ; if we may call them Friends, who Congratulate and Careless^s us, while we are able to Reward them, or to do them Service. But if Job be cast upon the Dunghil, or Christ be brought near the Cross ; the one is forsaken of his Acquaintance, and the other of his very Disciples. 'Tis Adversity that shews the real, the *fast* Friend ; and then is our Time to express our Charity, when another *wants* it, whether Friend, or Enemy ; by endeavouring to Relieve him that Suffers by Iniquity : For if we use not our Endeavours for his Deliverance, it is to be supposed, that we are well enough pleased with his Condition ; well enough

enough satisfied, though he continue in it. And is this Charity? That Active, Generous, Restless Virtue, that knows no Bounds, but Impossibilities? That Christian Grace, which is ready to offer up Life it self? That God-like Spirit, which is made up of Goodness, Mercy, and Love? No, no: Charity Befriendeth all, doeth Good to all, extendeth Relief and Compassion to all; to him that Suffers, and even to those that do the Wrong; to those that *seek Counsel against the Just, and gnash upon him with their Teeth, Psal. 37. 12.* Their Case is to be Pitied indeed, because their Day is coming; the Day, *when God will render to every Man according to his Works: To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality,*

tality, God will give Eternal Life. But to those who are Contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, he will render Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil, Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9.

XII.

12. But I must hasten to the next Character St. Paul gives of *Charity*; which is, That it *Rejoiceth in the Truth*. The best Divines take the Word here, not in a strict, limited Sense, as it signifies *Truth* in *Speech* only, in opposition to *Lying*; but in a very large Notion, as it signifies *Probity of Heart*, *Sincerity* in all *Things*, *Universal Uprightness*, and *Rectitude* of *Life*, in opposition to all *Iniquity*. Charity is of no narrow Spirit;

Spirit; but as diffusive as the Ocean, as wide and spreading as the Universe; and therefore it is not fit to bound it up here within a narrow Sense. In short, it signifies the *Entire* and *True Practice* of Religion; and so the Apostle's meaning is, That Charitable People are overjoy'd when Religion prospereth and increaseth; when Truth and Righteousness take Place, and gain Ground; when the Power of Godliness appeareth in Christians Lives; when they perform their respective Duties truly, uprightly, and sincerely, as it becometh their Profession, and is suitable to their high Calling.

This is peculiarly Applicable to those of St. Paul's Function, who cannot but be passionately affected with Joy unspeakable, when they

they find their Labours successful; when the Work and Pleasure of God prospers in their Hands; when they see of the Travels of their Souls, and behold the Fruit of it to their Satisfaction: Nor can there be any such great Encouragement to Men of that Sacred Office, as to be able to call their several Charges, as St. Paul did the *Thessalonians*, their *Joy and Crown of Rejoycing*, 1 Thess. 2. 19. Or to say as St. John did in the like case, 3 John 4. *I have no greater Joy, than to hear that my Children walk in the Truth*: That is, as becometh the Truth; in Holiness and Sobriety, in Humility and Meekness, in Peace and Love; and in all those Virtues which Adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour.

But

But this Matter doth not only concern Ministers of the Gospel. All People should be their Assistants in their respective Stations and Degrees, to forward the true Interest and Advancement of Religion. This is the most Zealous Expression of our hearty Love towards God; the most significant Argument of Charity towards our Brethren; the truest Testimony of an Enlarged and Noble Mind: To take Pleasure in seeing Virtue and Holiness thrive, and the Kingdom of Christ advanced in the World. In order thereto, every one should be Zealous in his Place and Capacity in Encouraging the Growth of true Piety, and in helping to Promote the Ends of the Gospel: So that Vice and Irreligion may be, not only out of Fashion, but out of Coun-

Countenance too. This is the greatest Charity in the World, because on this depends the Salvation of Souls, which every particular Member of the Church is obliged to help on, and set forward, as much as in him lieth. Begin at *Home*, and Encourage your Families to be truly Religious in the first place. The holy Psalmist sets you a great Example, *Psal. 101.* from Vers. 2. to Vers. 8. *I will walk in my House with a perfect Heart. I will take no wicked Thing in hand: I hate the Sins of Unfaithfulness; there shall no such cleave unto me. A froward Heart shall depart from me; I will not know (or countenance) a wicked Person. Whoso privily slandereth his Neighbour, him will I destroy: Whoso hath also a proud Look and high Stomach, I will not suffer him.*

Mine

Mine Eyes took upon such as are faithful in the Land, that they may dwell with me: Whoso leadeth a Godly Life, he shall be my Servant. There shall no deceitful Person dwell in my House; he that telleth Lies, shall not tarry in my sight. Our great Busines in this Life, is not to raise our selves Fortunes, but to do God Service, and to do the greatest Good we can to those about us: And the true way of doing both is, by our Examples, Councils, and Authority; to Encourage all under our Care, to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly, in this present World.

And next to our Private Families, the Neighbourhood we belong to, must have a due share of our Zeal also. As we go about; we should sow Righteousness, especially where we find the Soil good:

good : Weed out the Cockle and Thistles ; Suppress every Thing that is Scandalous and Hurtful ; Mend Breaches ; Reform Manners ; Reprove Immorality ; Cherish Honesty ; Countenance the Meek and Gentle ; Teach Men to be Humble and Peaceable, to be Orderly and Pious, to be Just and Charitable ; to go to their Prayers, to live in Unity , to submit to those who have the Rule over them in the Lord ; we should teach Men how to Love, and how to be Beloved : In a word, we should make it our busines to Direct and Assist one another, so that in this World we may all lead Quiet and Peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty. This is the way to serve the Truth, to promote the Truth, to advance its Interest and Honour, to make

it spread, flourish, and prosper so, that we may have cause of Rejoycing indeed; what Joy had St. Paul to see Religion propagated, though it was sometimes by the help of those, who were spurred on chiefly by Emulation, that they might outshine him, and lessen the Glory of his Zeal and Success? *Phil. 1.* Some indeed preach Christ even of Envy and Strife, and some also of Good Will: The one preach Christ of Contention, the other of Love. What then? Why notwithstanding every way, whether in Pretence, or in Truth; *Christ is preached, and therein* (saith he) *I do rejoice; yea, and I will rejoice.* Some Portion of this Joy shall every one have, that helpeth to serve and advance Truth in his Place and Vocation, and according to

to his Abilities. Christ is thereby served in some measure, and the Comfort of it will return into the Charitable and Good Man's Bosom, though he doeth no more than what a good Example com-
eth to. I am sure, that when we come to lie upon our Death-beds, where Conscience useth to speak plain and home, a greater Joy and Comfort there cannot be, than to reflect upon the good Examples we have given our Bre-
thren, and the many good Offi-
ces we have done them; and to consider, that in doing to the ver-
y least of these, we have done them unto Christ, and served Christ. Then there will be room for that Prayer of *Hezekiah*, Isa. 38. 3. *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked be-
fore thee in Truth, and with a per-
fect*

feel Heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. What Joy and Comfort those will then have, who hinder the Progress of Religion, by disseminating Evil Principles, by fomenting Dissentions and Animosities ; and by other Antichristian Practises, that Day at farthest will shew ; when every one's Conscience, (if he hath any left) how drowsie soever it may be now, will be sure to awake, and tell him his own.

XIII.

13. The Character of *Charity* which followeth is, *That it beareth all Things.* 'Twere more agreeable to render this place thus ; *Charity covereth or concealeth all Things, (which are done amiss ;)* for this seems here to be the most

P. natu-

natural Sense of the Greek Word ;
the other Notion of it, which
concerneth the *bearing* or *suffering*
all Things, belonging rather to
the last Character of *Charity*.

To lay Things to ones Charge,
which he is not Guilty of, is very
Unjust ; to blame him upon meer
Suspicion, is very Rash ; and to
divulge every Fault, though we
certainly know it, is very Uncha-
ritable.

In order to our due Practice as
to this point, we are to note by
way of Caution ; That the Laws
of Charity do not oblige us to
conceal the Crimes of another in
these five Cases :

1. Where the Criminal him-
self hath made the Fact Noto-
rious.

2. Where

2. Where the Interest of an whole Society is nearly concern'd.
3. Where Publick Justice ought to be done.
4. Where Charity to the Offender requires the taking notice of it.
5. Where the discovering of a Sin is absolutely necessary for ones own Vindication.

In all Cases the greatest Charity must take place. But where the End of making anothers Faults known, is not Good, Necessary, Just, or Charitable, but Mean, and Hurtful rather, we should be as tender of a Neighbour's Fame, as of our own ; and no more speak of his Crimes, than we durst discover *Secrets*, which in Conscience and Honour we are bound to keep in the dark.

There are two great Reasons, for which *Charity* requires us to be very careful of this.

1. That the divulging of another's Offences is so far from doing him any Good, that it is a probable way to harden him in a course of Wickedness. Shame is sometimes the strongest Bridle, to restrain People from Things that are of bad Report: If you take off that Check, there is no staying them; but *they turn to their Course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel*, Jer. 8. 6. Nor is there a more ready means to make them Shameless, than to expose those Miscarriages to open view, which they cannot but like the less, because they are afraid of a Discovery: Private Admonitions, if kindly and discreetly tendered

dred to them themselves, often prove a successful Method of Re-claiming those who have as yet a Brow ; because those Admonitions are an Argument of Friendship, which makes the softest and deepest Impression : For which reason, saith our Saviour, *Matth. 18. 15.* *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* This is the most likely way to gain (or Reform) him ; whereas to proclaim, or whisper out his Faults, especially to Persons unconcerned, and that too with Pleasure, and as a sort of Entertainment, is the ready means of rendering his Heart obdurate, and of making all Councils recoil, as from a Flint : Because in this case, it is not Charity that speaks, but ill Nature, and a designing Mind.

Many times it happens, that while a Man's Sins lie close under Covert, he is brought to a Sense and Reformation of them, by the private Convictions of Conscience, and by God's Blessing from the Pulpit. There is the greater Encouragement to amend, because he feareth not Reproach. But if he be brought upon the open Stage, and exposed to the Scoufings of the Multitude; like a Deer hunted with a publick Cry, and brought at last to the Bay, 'tis odds but he will adventure upon any Dangers, the Clamors of the World will make him desperate; so that in stead of Reforming, he will pursue his Sins the more greedily, presuming that the future Pleasures, or Gainfulness of them, will pay something for the loss of his former Reputation.

2. Besides the Mischief done to the Actor by Uncharitable Detractions, no little Hurt is done to those to whom the Sin is told ; which still confirms that of the Wise Man, *Prov. 10, 12.* *Love covereth all Sins.* By hearing of ill Things, People learn insensibly to do them ; because there is a Contagion in all Wickedness ; whereby the Minds of those to whom it is discovered, are infected by degrees, if there be not a very strong Antidote to keep out the Pestilence, which is rarely provided in those cases. For 'tis not usual with us to lend an Ear, but to Things we are very *willing* to hear of ; and by this means an Evil Report doth naturally cast the stronger Influence, and doth naturally make the deeper Impression, the Mind being *disposed* for

it before-hand. Upon which account, 'tis necessary for every good Man with all possible care to preserve his *Ear* from Infection, lest it pass through *that* to the Heart: For a Relation many times becomes an Example; so that by being made acquainted with the Faults of others, People are much the worse themselves. The Sin is proposed for imitation, which the Tale-bearer seemeth to reprehend; it is like the opening of a Plague-Sore, which a Charitable Hand will be tender of doing, for fear of propagating the Disease. Our Minds are apt to be strangely wrought upon by every Thing about us, because there is not in our Nature that strong defensive Faculty, which is in some other Creatures. Fish indeed retain their fresh Taste, although they swim

in

in the saltiest Waters; but Humane Nature is apt to participate of the Temper of the People, and of the Condition of the Climate where we live, and our Dispositions alter accordingly; just as Waters, which pass through the Channels of the Earth, vary their Savour with the Veins of the Soyls through which they slide. In a corrupt Place, 'tis an easie thing to be corrupted; and one great Reason is, because the Knowledge of a Neighbour's Vices is apt to breed in another an Inclination to the same Evils; it worketh in another presently and insensibly, if not a full *Approbation*, yet *a less Dislike* of those Corruptions, which their Eyes and Ears are used to the Sense of: So that when one comes to be familiarly acquainted with the Irreligious Cour-

Courses of bad Neighbours, he is in a great Hazard ; and 'tis great odds, if he doth not in time make those Courses his own Choice ; because this is a great Encouragement to Vice, that it wants not a Precedent.

Therefore to express our Charity in this case, let us carefully observe that Advice of the Son of Sirach, Eccl. 19. 7, 8. *Rehearse not unto another what is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether it be friend or foe, talk not of other Men's Lives ; and if thou canst without Offence, reveal them not.* For Charity-fake every Story is not to be told ; for though it be true, it may be hurtful ; though it be not hurtful in the first Report, it may be so in the consequence ; because Fame is like the Cloud which the Prophet's

phet's Servant saw, *1 King. 18. 44.* the further it spreads, the greater it grows, till there be no more comparison between its Original, and its Increase, than there is between the breadth of a Man's Hand, and the Dimensions of the Firmament; and who can tell how Mischievous and Terrible the End will be? *The Tongue is a world of Iniquity*, saith St. James, ch. 3.v.6. And for the preventing of a great deal, let me recommend these few Things in short to your Charitable Practice.

With all possible Art and speed, stop the Mouths of those, *who, like the old Athenians, spend their Time in nothing else*, (for the most part) but either to tell, or to hear some new Thing, *Act. 17. 21.* In spight of good Neighbourhood, and Religion

gion too, some will wander about from *House to House*, *Tatlers*, *Busie-bodies*, speaking *Things that they ought not*, 1 Tim. 5. 13. The only Business of such idle People is, to lay open the Lives of others, to stain their good Name, and to spoil the Savour of that which is better than precious Ointment; by casting in such dead Flies, as turn the Perfume into a Stink, And what Injuries come by this Evil Practice, not only to particular Persons, but to whole Societies, is too too manifest. The least is that which *Salomon* mentions, (though that is too great, and sometimes irreparable,) a *Whisperer separateth chief Friends*, Prov. 16.28. A good Remedy in this case is, to turn the Ear aside, and not suffer it to receive any hurtful Informations. Such Stories are not wont

to

to be told People that are deaf, because there the Ends of the Whisperer cannot be answered. 'Twould be an Effectual and Charitable Means of destroying those Works of Darkness, to discourage the Authors of them, by letting them see, how Unprofitable their Works are in the first Practise.

If another's Sin chance to fall under thine Eye, express your Charity, by laying a Mantle over it with a quick Hand, that it may not indanger the rest by being exposed to publick View. It is thy Brother's Nakedness that is seen; and where there is such a shameful Spectacle, Love should imitate the Piety of *Noah*'s two Sons, *Shem* and *Japhet*; who, that they might not cast the least glance upon their Father's Nakedness, went backward with a Garment

ment upon their Shoulders ; venturing rather their stumbling at his Feet, than they would behold his Shame. Cursed was *Cham*, that not content to have been an Eye-witness of the Indecent Sight, Scoff'd at it too, and became the Proclaimer of it.

If the Sin be so manifest that it cannot, or so foul that it must not be hid, express your Charity by speaking of it (and that with Prudence and Kindness also) to the Criminal himself, who is the Party concerned to Repent, and to mend his Life for the future. The way to cure a Flaw, is not to run to such as are whole, but to dress the Side where the Wound lieth. Though it be Oyl and Wine too, which you pour in there, the Smart is tolerable, because the Operation is proper; and the Hand
that

that works, is Charitable and Friendly. Other Methods are to be avoided, because they always Fret, and very rarely Heal.

After all, in stead of discovering other Men's Faults, it is necessary for every one to look into his own. And if People would but turn their Eyes homeward, they would find so much Employment for them there, that they would have neither Need, nor Leisure to look abroad. There is in every Breast so much Nature, whatever there be of Grace, that our continual Care is necessary to Cleanse our selves from the one, and to Increase the other. Nor is this possible to be done, but by searching narrowly into ones own State ; which if all Inquisitive People would do, they could not but discover presently this one great Fault

Fault of their own; that by prying curiously after others, they have all along overlook'd themselves.

XIV.

14. So far is *Charity* from delighting to reveal the Failings and Miscarriages of others, that St. *Paul* gives this further Character of a Charitable Person, that *he believeth all Things*; that is, all Things that are *Good*, and all Things that are Reasonable for a Good Man to believe. Credulity at large is no Virtue; or, if it be, 'tis no safe one; because 'tis so easie a matter to be deceiv'd; especially in *Men*, which upon the Weights are the most deceitful; and because it is sometimes such a woeful and calamitous Thing to be deceived indeed. There are many

Dan-

Dangers, which Religion doth not require us to run into, by Trusting without Reserve; and the Question may be Undeterminable, which of the two is most to be blamed, He that believes *every Thing*; or he that believes *Nothing* that is told him? On each hand it is not Charity, but Folly that is the Ascendant. The Apostle's meaning therefore is, That in Cases which are not plain and clear beyond just Reason of Doubtfulness, true Christian Charity inclines one to believe favourably, and to Err rather on the right Hand, by entertaining a kind Opinion even when it is not apparently deserved. St. Paul, who so well understood the Operations of Virtue, was sensible what good Effects this is apt to produce; and how naturally it tendeth to

Q

make

make the Minds and Lives of People easie ; and, on the contrary, how hurtful it is to the Peace and Comfort of particular Men, and whole Societies, to take up hard Conceits without sufficient and plain Grounds ; to run away with them, and to act upon them. Hatreds and Mischief follow in the end ; witness those Outrages which he himself committed, upon his own groundless Apprehensions. He believed once, that Jesus Christ was a Deceiver ; and that his Disciples were a very Dangerous and Heretical Sect. Upon which false and groundless Principle, he verily thought with himself, that *he ought to do many Things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth*, Act. 26. 9. And how fatal and mischievous was that one *Thought* to the Church of

of Christ? What a world of Vexation and Misery did it not put them to? And yet all the while the People he Persecuted were Innocent; and the Persecution was bottom'd upon nothing, but his own unreasonable and wild Presumptions. Thus it is, when Men believe without Judgment and Candor; believe Evil Things upon Evil Surmises, and side with Sinister Notions, as their first Imaginations and Passions sway them. Havock, and Outrage, are the usual Consequents; Peace, and a good Conscience, and Charity, and whatsoever else is desirable, all goes to wrack in the Storm, which sometimes cannot be allayed without a Sacrifice of Blood too.

Now for the increasing in us a Spirit of Charity, and for the due

expressing it as to this Point, this General Rule must be carefully observed; *To take Things always in the best Sense*; and never to give way to Hard Thoughts, where there is room for kind or favourable Constructions. Many times indeed Men's Guilt appear-
eth so foul and open, that the Evidence is too strong for thofe that are willing to be Scepticks in that particular. In which case, Charity no more requires you to believe contrary to your Experience, than it binds you to discredit the Testimony of all your Senses. As, where People act maliciously every Day, in spight of all the Charity in the World; you cannot but look upon them as very ill Men. But where the Matter is doubtful and uncertain, Charity should always fet it in the fairest

fairest Light ; or rather I should say, in the *darkest* Corner, to blind the Guilt as much as is possible, and to hide it even from our own Eyes. Remember the Charity of the Lord Jesus upon the Cross, when his Blood-thirsty Enemies had now done their very worst against Him. One would have thought, their Malice was open enough : For *Pilate* himself was satisfied of his Innocence ; *He knew* (saith the Evangelist) *that for Envy they had delivered him*, Mat. 27. 18. And yet to cover their Sin in some measure, He himself pleaded their Ignorance in that Charitable Prayer for them ; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luke 23. 34. Had it been possible, he could have concealed their Guilt from his Father's

view. But God seeth the very Secrets of the Heart ; all Things are naked and open to him, with whom we have to do. But this is one of God's incommunicable Attributes. We see at best but through a Glass ; a dark and dim View ; and our Sight is much the dimmer, when we wculd look into Men's Breasts, where we have no Glass at all to look through. Therefore where we are left to Conjecture, our Opinion should be on the Charitable side, because our Eye can have a direct Stroke upon the Principle of another's Action. Perhaps it was Inadvertency ; perhaps it proceeded from Ignorance ; perhaps from common Humane Frailties : Many Excuses Charity will help us to find out, before we need charge it upon the Heart.

This

This General Rule, of putting the best Sense upon Men's Actions, being laid before you, I shall add these few Particulars for the better Practice of it. Not to be easie in believing the *first* Representations. By our daily Experience we may find, that the first Account of Things is commonly the Falsest, because it is usually attended with Partiality, to possess the Minds of People with a Prejudice before-hand ; it is so in Men's relating Things of others, especially of their Superiors in Church or State ; Partiality is never wanting there. Some have a sort of Itch, both in their Minds and Tongues, to speak Evil of those they care not for. Upon which account, when an ill Thing is offered to our Belief, before Credit be given to a foul Story,

we should consider, Whether the Suggestion may not proceed from Hearts which are touch'd with a Disease somewhat resembling the Botch of *Egypt*. Many are apt to take up hard Opinions upon Trust; which is not only Uncharitable, but Unrighteous too: Because the Party is thereby rifled of his Reputation at all adventures. If the Story be false, the Injustice is manifest; if it be but probable, there is Probability against it too; if it be altogether uncertain, it is not Judgment, but Partiality, that Governis the Belief of it: And after all, if Accusations be enough, every Man must lie at Mercy for his Innocence, though his own Conscience acquit him. 'Tis necessary therefore in all ill Reports, to suspend ones Perswasion till the Truth
ap-

appears; and rather to be for the Charitable Sense, because to be sure no Wrong is done in that case; whereas Judgment is Iniquity when it passeth upon Surmise; and he that Suffers by the Sentence, Suffers not for his own, but for another's Fault; that is, for another's too quick and rash Judgment.

In short, That Charity may make us believe all the Good we hear, and hardly any thing but what is Good; let it teach our Hearts to be *in Love with Peace*. Reports, whether they be true or false, are *disquieting*, and whatever the first Design of them be, the End is Quarrel; a Mischief that is attended with such a Train of ill Consequences, that we cannot be too careful in using our utmost Endeavours to choak the Ori-

Original Cause. *Study to be quiet, and to do your own business,* saith St. Paul, 1 Thess. 4. 11. If Men's Hearts and Hands were thus honestly and wisely employed, it would be a concise, but a very effectual way of setting their Ears and Tongues much more at rest.

XV.

15. The Fifteenth Character of *Charity* is, That it *hopeth all Things*. As by the former Description St. Paul shews, how we are to think as to Things *present*, or *past*; so by this he directs us, what Thoughts we are to entertain as to the *future*. However Men be represented, or may appear, we must not despair of them, or give them utterly for gone, as Reprobates

bates and Castaways ; undone and lost to all Eternity. The Reasons of this are taken from the Office of *Charity* ; which is, to do all the Good we can in every respect.

1. Now, first, to account a Man past all Recovery, is the ready way to supersede the use of those Means, which in ordinary Cases are thought fit and proper to bring People to Repentance. Charity is a most Active and Zealous Grace, especially when it is concern'd about a Soul. No good Methods are wanting there, as long as there are Hopes. True Charity is apt to use Reprehensions, Reasonings, Counsels, Warnings, Prayers ; every Thing that the miserable Creature needs ; and sometimes the greatest Pains are little

little enough ; I am loth to say, too little. But all is thought superfluous, and to no purpose, in a Case that is judged desperate : All Endeavours, as well as Hopes, are given over ; because none will undertake a Task, which he verily believes impossible : It would be all one, as if he should Preach or Pray over a Rock, with a vain Design to remove it out of its Place with his Breath. It is a great Discouragement even to a Charitable Man, to have to do with those, whose Spirits and Courses are wicked, though they make great Professions of Religion : And their Case is the more deplorable, if they trust in themselves that they are Righteous, while their Hearts and Souls are out of frame. Yet an Hypocrite may be Reclaimed, though with much

much difficulty. The Shame of the World, or the Gnawings of Conscience, or the Melancholy Circumstances of a Sick Bed, or the Frightful Prospect of Hell, or some outward extraordinary Judgment, may in time bring him to a sense of his sad Condition. Captivity and Chains humbled *Manasseh* himself; and one day God will be too hard for the sturdiest Sons of *Belial*.

Now, as long as there are some, though but faint and glimmering Hopes, there are some Encouragements, such as they be. But for Labour, which Men think will be certainly and utterly lost, they can find no Reason; and this is one great Mischief which comes by Uncharitableness of this kind, that it damps the Minds and Endeavours of Men, and violently hinders

hinders the carrying on of the Cause of the Son of God.

2. But, Secondly, more than this; such desperate Perswasions touching the forlorn State of others, are a most powerful Temptation to those Uncharitable Wretches, to Treat them with the extreamest Outrage, who have the ill Luck to fall under their deadly Sentence. Witness those Cruelties which have been acted by some *Romanists*, as they have had the Power in their Hands over such as they are pleased to call *Hereticks*. How false soever the Premisses be, the Consequence is Natural. For how can any gentle Dealings be expected by those, who are presumed by these Zealots to be in a Damned State? If God hath Cursed them, why may not they? If God hath consigned

signed them to Eternal Flames; why may not such as think so, cast them into the Fire here? This they believe, is but the beginning of God's Work; and where is the Fault, if they do like God? It is thus in all Cases, where Men have the confidence to Usurp Christ's Authority, and to Judge before the time; whom they will, they Save; and whom they can, they Punish; with this Difference, That in the midst of Wrath, they think not, as God doth, upon Mercy.

Alas! what becomes all this while of the great Christian Rule, *Charity hopeth all Things?* And the best it can of all Men? Charity requires us to do others all the Good Offices which lie in our Power; and when all is done, the same Charity doth bind us also to leave

leave every one to stand or fall to
his own Master. Lord ! that any
Men should proceed to that sinful
degree of Immoderation and In-
solence, as to confine all true Re-
ligion within a Party ; and to
make another's Dissent the Infal-
lible Mark of an Apostate and Re-
probate. 'Tis well for us all, that
a Good God governs the World ;
that he hath the Custody of our
Souls ; and that he is to be the
Judge, who was the Redeemer of
them : For were we to determine
one another's final Lot, who is
there almost that could be saved ?
Suppose there were Five hundred
Parties in the World, after this
rate it would be Five hundred to
Nothing, but every Man would
be Damned, because each Party
would Damn all but it self ; and
if that were Damned too by Four
hun-

hundred ninety and nine, it would be very great Fortune for it to escape. Now, what is all this, but to thrust the Lord Jesus out of his Throne, and for us to leap upon the Bench, who must our selves be Arraigned at his Tribunal ? In the Name of God, let us all walk by the same Rule, and hope the best of all Men. Perhaps we may be sometimes mistaken in our Hopes ; but an Error of that kind hath an easie Pardon, if it stands in any need of it : I am sure we can be no Losers by our Charity. Our Case may be desperate for want of it, especially if our Uncharitableness drive us on to kindle Eternal Fires for our Brethren : There the Loss is likely to be Infinite, without any escaping. We shall perish our selves by the Flames which we have

R raised ;

242 *A Practical Discourse*

raised; as the King of Babylon's Servants did, Dan. 3. 22. when they threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, into the burning fiery Furnace. Judge not, saith our Blessed Saviour, that ye be not judged: For with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again, Mat. 7. 1, 2. St. Paul himself, though he had such abundance of Revelations; yet he durst not take upon him to pass Sentence, no not upon profess'd Infidels: *What have I to do to judge them that are without?* 1. Cor. 5. 12. They and all Mankind must be left to God's Tribunal, who is the only Searcher of Hearts; the only Judge that knoweth Infallibly who is, or shall be his. His Mercies are infinite; his Paths are as yet past finding out: *His*

Ways

Ways are not as our Ways, nor are his Thoughts as our Thoughts: For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his Ways higher than our Ways, and his Thoughts than our Thoughts, Isa. 55. 8; 9. He hath indeed affix'd a dreadfull Penalty to his Laws, especially under the Gospel: But whether he hath not reserved to himself a Power of Remitting the Penalty, in some special and extraordinary Cases, is to us a Secret: There is indeed but one ordinary and strait Path to Heaven, by Faith and true Repentance; yet who can tell, but that the Wisdom and Providence of God may bring it so about, that some little By-Paths, wherein People of good and honest Minds, thought of different Perswasions, do go now, may in the end fall into the ready Road? There is

indeed this Doom annexed to the Promulgation of the Gospel, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*; and yet Charity will not suffer us to pass the Sentence of Eternal Ruine, either upon those Children which die Unbaptized; or upon that vast Number of poor well-meaning Heathens, who never heard of Christ; and therefore lived and died in Infidelity. For ought we know, God may have some secret Ways of applying the Merits of Jesus Christ to the Souls of some People, whom Censurious and Uncharitable Wretches look upon now, as utterly lost and gone. In all Cases we should judge Charitably of others, as hoping for a favourable Judgment our selves: And if in our Charity we chance to err, 'tis an Error on the Right Hand however; and rather

rather to be ventured on, than a rigid Truth, if it be uncertain. In Heaven there are many Mansions; room enough to hold us all, if all of us will make it our business to get thither. But the loss of my Neighbour's Glory will not make any addition unto mine; and therefore we should wish, that the whole World may be saved. Till we are better acquainted with the Counsels of God, we must take heed, how we determine the Bounds of Men's Habitations to Eternity, or set out their Lots. Remember they are your Brethren; Men for whom Christ died, and for whom God may have Mercy in store, whatever others rashly think. And certainly you may well afford them your Charity, whom God himself, for ought you know,

R 3 may

246 *A Practical Discourse*
may yonchsafe with Everlasting
Salvation.

To express then our Charity
aright as to this particular, we
should never quite despair of any
Men, nor give over all Endeav-
ours for them, as if their Con-
dition were altogether desperate;
but use such Means, as are nec-
essary and proper to bring the most
miserable Wretches to a Sense of
their true State. For who know-
eth, but one time or other God
may give a Blessing to our La-
bours? Who knoweth but perad-
venture he will give such Souls
Repentance to the acknowledg-
ment of the Truth, that they may
recover themselves out of the
Snare of the Devil? These are
true Expressions of Charity in-
deed, to be always one the Work-
ing hand; to be still upon apply-
ing

ing Means, upon using Endeavours, to let our hearty Wishes and Prayers accompany our Endeavours, and so to leave the Success of all to God; and all Mankind, especially our Brethren in the Common Faith; to God's merciful Judgment; hoping and thinking the best we can of them to the very last.

XVI.

16. This being sufficiently considered, I come at length to the Sixteenth and last Character, which St. Paul gives in this his Description of Charity; that it *Endureth all Things*: That is, it teacheth and helps us to be *Patient* under all our Sufferings. Howsoever we fall into a Suffering Condition; whether by the particular Providence

dence of God, for our Tryal and Correction ; or by the Rage and Power of Tyrants, for Truth and Righteousness-sake ; or by some Infirmity, or Distemper in our Nature ; or by some outward Contingence ; or by the Wickedness of private Men ; by their Pride, Covetousness, Revengeful Tempers, and the like ; or by means of the different Perswasions, which others entertain about Matters of Religion. Whensoever, and howsoever any Things happen to us, which are Grievous and Afflictive, we should endure them ; so as becomes Men trained up under a Suffering Saviour, with Temper, and Fortitude, and *patient Continuance in Well-doing.*

The Apostle hath very fitly placed this Character of *Charity* last ; for Patience is a Virtue

that followeth others in the Rear. Notwithstanding all our Virtues, our Lot may be to Suffer at last ; and therefore we have need to be armed with Patience after all. *Ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of God, ye may receive the Promise,* Heb. 10. 36.

The Truth is, it is a Virtue that is attended with a great Retinue ; as, with Meekness, Humility, Self-Denial, Charity, Modesty, Peaceableness of Mind ; Christian Magnanimity, Constancy, Piety, Prudence, and the like : For without these, it is impossible to be Patient after a Christian manner, especially when Injuries and Indignities are beyond the common Size. But at this time, I shall discourse of it only as it bears relation to Charity ; *valorem vero et potestum in rebus* of *solidi* *indignationis* *et* *ad* *charitatis*.

Now

Now any one that duly considers the various Injuries which are done by Men of Unquiet and Stormy Tempers, may easily discern how perfective of Charity this Virtue is.

¶ 1. Impatient People are not so much as Friends to themselves. Though one would think they were secure of their *own* Affections; and their Unquietness seems to argue, that they have very little Affection for any else; yet in Reality they are their own most hurtful Enemies. Every cross Accident puts them upon the Fret; and the more active and busie their Thoughts are, the greater still is the Fermentation: Either Pride, or Envy, or Covetousness, or Intemperance; nay, many times bare Imagination, helps to raise the

the Distemper of the Mind to such an high pitch, that it terminates in Frenzy, or in a Symptome that is very like it: And what Comfort can there be in such a ones Life, where there is so much Uproar? Or what Peace and Complacency can there be in a Mind, which upon every Breath of Air falls into an Agitation, and is Rolling and Restless, like the Wayes of the Sea, which in a Tempest yields nothing but Noise and Foam, besides the danger of Shipwrecks? Patience keeps a Calm upon the Coast; so that there is either a perfect Serenity, or, at worst, but a little Cloud; which upon deliberate Thoughts doth soon vanish: And by this means, the rest of the Divine Graces continue in an indisturbed Condition, and the Soul becomes every day more

more and more fruitful in Good Works ; like the *Halcyon*, (to which some Divines have compared the Church) a Sea-Bird, whose only Breeding-time is in a great Tranquility.

2. It were the better, if Impatient Spirits did injure none but themselves: That Wrong they are bound to bear, if they will bear any thing. But the Mischief of this Vice is, That it loves to be Vexatious and Hurtful to all that are round about it. A petulant, foward piece of Carnality ; that is ready at hand to Avenge the Quarrel of every other Lust, and to be an Executioner in its Cause. Hence come Malicious Designs ; Uncharitable Constructions ; Opprobrious Speeches ; Revengeful Arts ; Studied Oppressions ; Unnecessary

necessary Suits at Law ; Sanguinary Proceedings ; and most of those Wicked and Mean Things, which are a Disgrace to Humane Nature, as well as Religion ; and a Nusance to all Societies. The Patient Man doth not lay and throw about him after a spightful manner, or to base Ends, or with vile and lewd Purposcs ; because there is a Principle of true Generosity, and a Spirit of Fortitude and Constancy which he acteth upon. This makes his Mind great, and sets him much above those Odious and Low Methods which are plain Arguments of a Mind that is Sordid and Degenerate. 'Tis infinitely Greater to bear a Wrong, than to do it. The Poorest and most Contemptible Creature can *annoy* ; but 'tis the *Man* only, and the *Christian*, that

pas-

passeth it by, disdaining to be moved out of himself; especially by those ordinary and common Provocations, which are rather Imaginary, than Real Injuries. Instance in *Words*; which are wont to make as deep, if not deeper Impressions, than the Hand: Yet they neither impoverish Land, nor break the Skin; nor not that about the Ear: So that thus far there is no Real Harm done. And if they touch the Soul, (as sometimes they do to the very Quick) the Fault is indeed in our selves; because it is our own Passion that sharpens them; and makes their ready way to the Heart; Which, were it fortified with Patience, would turn it off with an easy and safe Hand; as a Bolt shot from a weak Man's Mouth; and then there would be no harm there.

there neither. These Things are Obvious; and were it only for want of Philosophy, that People know not how to avoid Nettles, there would be some Excuse for those, who have not been blest with a Liberal Education. But the common Reason of all Mankind can tell us, that when we are Affected by a Foolish Expression, the Sting comes rather from our own Fancy, than from a few Syllables; and that the Hurt we feel, is in the Imagination, that Works powerfully, but too rashly upon the Brutish Appetite, to seek Revenge and Satisfaction for Trifles.

In Patience possess ye your Souls;
saith our Saviour, *Luke 21. 19.*
It is a certain way to be Easie *in* the World, and *to* the World; which I am sure is no little piece of Charity. Considering the vast

Dis-

Disadvantages which come to Mankind by our Boisterous Passions, and the Common Hurt which one single Person may do to a great many by them; hardly can any particular Man endure too much: Even a Real Injury to himself is to be born with Patience, till great Charity requires him to seek for some Redress, and that too must be done with a Charitable Mind, and after as just and as kind a manner as may be. And after all, it should be considered, that the Reparation gotten may not answer the Damage, wherein a Man involves himself and others, for want of Patience at first.

3. There is yet a third Reason, why *Charity* should teach us to endure all Things; and it is taken from

from the Kindness we owe even those our Enemies, that bring us into Affliction, and perhaps designedly. As Unjust as they be, Christian Charity obligeth us to do our best, to bring them to a Sense of their Wickedness, that so they may be led to Repentance. Now Patience is a very probable means of bringing this about, because it is a most admirable Virtue; and the Sight of it is very moving, very apt to work upon the Affections. It is enough to make a deep Impression upon any Hearts, that do not consist of Iron, or Flint, to see Men take it patiently when they do well, and yet suffer for it. Compassion is many times a much stronger Thing than Argument; and it hath often made the Spirits of Cruel Men relent, when hardly any

any Thing else could. It is indeed a common Saying, *That by bearing one Injury, you do invite and encourage wicked People to load you with more.* But such Instances are very rare, where there is a true Sense of Religion, or Humanity; and those Natures must needs be very foul and dreggy, which take Delight and Pleasure in heaping up Injuries upon Injuries: Yet even in that case, Time and Patience do Miracles; because Conscience, if it stirs once, is a very troublecome Thing to a Wicked Man, and that which makes the pursuing of Mischief a very troublesome Work; so that many times base Intentions tire of themselves, when the Patience of an Innocent Oppressed Person holds out; and they tire the sooner by it. Witness the great

great Changes which were made in the Minds of Persecutors, chiefly, if not merely, by the wonderful Patience of Christians in the Primitive Ages. *Tiberian* the President of Palestine sent the Emperor *Trajan* word, *That he was weary of his Proceedings against the Galileans*; (as Christians were then commonly called:) Their Invincible Courage, and Constancy, and Calmness of Minds, notwithstanding all their sharpest Sufferings, made multitudes of the Heathens, not only weary of Persecuting them, but weary too of their own Principles; for they concluded, that Religion was from God indeed, for which such vast Numbers of Men and Women did suffer the most exquisite Torments with unshaken Minds, and evenness of

*Usher Ap-
pend Ignat.
p. 9*

Temper, without any Transport, unless it were of Joy for their Tribulations. *Justin Martyr* confesseth that it was the Thing
that converted him to Christianity, *For* (saith he) *when I saw the Christians go to their Torments and Deaths so Undauntedly, I thought it impossible that such People should live in Wickedness, and the Love of Pleasures, because it concerns all Vicious and Voluptuous Persons to avoid Death.* Their Unconquerable Patience was an Argument that Truth was on their side; and this made Proselytes even of their Enemies; so that in times of Persecution, their Numbers increased. For which reason that Politick Emperor *Julian*, that hated Christianity so, many times, hindered its Professors from being put to Death, because their Patience wrought

wrought such wondēful Effects upon the Hearts of the very Pagans. Where Patience is, there is God; the Power and Spirit of God: And who knoweth how soon, and how powerfully that Holy Spirit may work upon the Hearts even of the Children of Disobedience.

I told you before, That the Law of Charity ties us to endure all Things with Patience; however Troubles come upon us, whether by the Injustice and Enmity of some; or by means of the different Perswasions of others, concerning Matters of Religion. And before I shut up this Discourse, it will be necessary for me to say something upon that Point of Charity.

Any one may see, how vastly Prejudicial it is to the Peace and

Interest not only of particular Persons, but of the Publick State, that even those whom we may reasonably presume to be Pious and Sincere Christians, cannot differ in their Judgments as to some Opinions that are in Vogue; but on each side, they are very hardly thought, and very hardly spoke of. Nay, as if the Persecutions of the Tongue were not keen enough, the Uncharitableness of Heady People hath proceeded to Confiscations and Flames also.

Before I go on upon this Theme, I must lay down these two Cautions;

I. That I do not take upon me to Prescribe to the Civil Magistrate, whose Office it is to look after the Good of the whole Community;

munity; what is most Necessary or Prudent for him, whether to permit, or to prohibit Differences of Opinion, I do not presume to Define here. Nor,

2. Is it my Meaning, That all Opinions should pass abroad without Lett or Contradiction, though they directly tend, some of them, to Subvert the Foundation of the common Christian Faith, or to corrupt Good Manners, or to destroy or injure Humane Societies.

But when Men are not Legislators for others, but Judges for themselves only ; when Points are knotty and Disputable, and hard to be clearly determined ; and when Opinions are harmless enough, especially while they lodge in the Minds of peaceable and

264 *A Practical Discourse*
modest Men; we should express
our Charity to each other, by al-
lowing every one the Liberty of
his own private Judgment, with-
out denying those of a different
Perswasion from us, either our
Communion, or our Affections.
Tis unreasonable to make Op-
nions Arguments to set up strait a
separate Party; and to use them
as the Men of Gilead did the word
Shibboleth, Judg. 12. 6. for a Note
of Discrimination between a Friend
and an Enemy. Opinions should
keep their own proper Station in
the Brain, without Tainting the
Heart; and tho' in some Points
we have various Perswasions, as
the Members of the Body have
various Uses and Offices; yet
Christian Charity should be like
one Common Soul, to Animate
to Influence, and to Comfort the
whole.

whole. The Reasons of it are many; but I shall mention only these Two, as sufficient Grounds for our Mutual Charity in this case.

1. There are a great many Doctrines, which are not ordinarily necessary to Salvation; and consequently we cannot suppose them to be Revealed to us after such a clear manner, as necessary Things are; Yet these are for the most part those Doctrines which have made so much Noise, and done so much Mischief in the World. The Way to Heaven is obvious enough, and easie to be discover'd *viz.* By believing the plain, common, and standing Articles of Christianity, and by leading a Godly, Righteous, and Sober Life. But there are divers

By-

By Speculations that are Intricate, and some of them hardly worth the Time and Pains bestowed on them; because the Enquiry is after Things, that are not only remote from our Faculties, but very distant too from our great and necessary Business. And what do we get by all our Enquiries after Matters that are thus Foreign and Dark? Truly very little: Perhaps a slight Transitory Glimpse at the long run, which brings something of present Pleasure to the Fancy, but nothing of real Advantage to the poor Soul. 'Tis pity indeed that Men should trifle away their precious Time thus: But if they will be at so much Pains for nothing but a little Delight for the time, methinks 'tis pity too, that other wiser Men should be so Uncharitable, as to begrudge them that

that after all their hard Labours :
Nor is there any Reason for
those Heats and Animosities about
Things that are out of our way
to Everlasting Rest. For why
should I Condemn or Hate another, because I conceive he Erreth
in such and such Points, when God
hath not peremptorily required
either him or me to know them
at all ; but both of us may be ig-
norant of them with safety ? Ma-
ny fierce Disputes, and hot Words,
have pass'd between *Lutherans* and
Calvinists abroad, and between ma-
ny of our selves here at home ;
and that about Things not neces-
sary to Salvation. And what
have Men gained by all this, but
the Vain-glory of having been
very warm Disputants on each
hand ? Charity would give us all
a far better Title : I am sure it
would

would intitle us to a far better Place, which we are concerned to strive how to gain, infinitely more than to turn Digladiators about Logick and Metaphysicks, and to run the hazard of Sacrificing all in a foolish Quarrel, who hath the best Skill in managing the Sword's Point ; where there is no need at all of any such Weapon. Where a Thing is doubtful, we should fairly propose our Thoughts, and offer the Reasons for them ; and so let it rest, with Hearts full of Charity on both fides. I doubt not but many good Christians have arrived at the Gate of *Paradise*, notwithstanding some slight Errors they happen'd to entertain by the way. As long as an Error doth not hurt the Foundation, nor gives Encouragement to a Wicked Life, nor destroys Charity ;

rity, I do not understand, but a Person so erring may well be saved, though he suffers the loss of the Hay and Stubble, which through Ignorance and Unskilfulness he built upon the right sound Faith.

2. As all Doctrines are not equally necessary, and manifest, so all Men's Apprehensions are not of an equal Capacity, nor their Opportunities and Means of Knowledge equal neither. I will not enter into that mee Dispute, whether all Sp'uls are equal? This is certain, that the more or less the Advantages of Education are, the more or less is a Man's Judgment and Faculties improved. Some Men may live in more Learned Times, or be bles'd with more Skilful Instructors, or be furnish'd with

270 A Practical Discourse

with more useful Books; or may find out a better Method, or may be encouraged with greater Rewards, or may search after Matters with more Impartiality, and freedom of Thought. Divers ways it happeneth, that as one Man exceedeth another in Stature, so one Man excelleth another in Knowledge too. And would it not be monstrous *Impatience*, not to endure to see another's Bulk? And to fall foul upon him, because he is not of an equal Growth with his Neighbour? Or because he is not of the same Aspect, of the same Features and Lineaments with his Neighbour? Why, the Uncharitableness is such when one quarreth with another, because he hath not the same pitch of Understanding with his Neighbour; and because he is not of the

the same Measure in his Capacities, and of the same Judgment in all Things. [d] He may truly love God, and God may everlastingly love him; though his Sense in a Controversie be different from another's, who loves, and is beloved of God, too: At best we see but through a Glass; and our Sight is very dim in comparison. It may happen that one's Eye may be naturally very weak, that he cannot, no not by the help of the Glass, see Things so well as another doth: Or perhaps there may be a little Habitual Prejudice in the case, which like an Eye troubled with the Jaundise, may discolour the Object, and present it to the Understanding with a little Tincture upon it: Or though the Sense it self be sound and clear, yet there may be some Specks in the

verbi

the very Glass. And the Result of all is this; That we are at the very best but Men, Subject to Errors, and Misapprehensions; And why should you be uncharitable to another Man, and not bear with his Infirmities, because God hath made him a Man, and not an Angel? In short, one Man feeth more, and further than another; and to persecute him for this, to be impatient and uncharitable for this, would be such Cruelty, as if I should cut off his Head, because it is a higher Chamfer mine own.

Before I let this Consideration go, I cannot but reflect upon the Wretched Uncharitableness of those who are followers of patience at all Dissenting in Religion; that they even kill Men for heresy; whatever Censures such deserve, they

they ought to be Spiritual; and such Censures are Charitable. I will add, that whatever a Prince may do in such a case, to secure the publick Peace, which he is bound in Conscience to provide for; yet for Heresie alone, and if it be not aggravated with any Criminal Actions, he ought not to inflict upon any the Punishment of Death. The first Instance we find of this Nature, was the killing of *Priscillian* and his Accomplices about the Year 385: But it was done by *Maximus* that Cruel Prince, that destroyed some Hereticks, and Catholicks too, without Discrimination. And *Sulpitius Severus* gives this Account of the Fact: *Hoc modo homines Luce indignissimi pessimo exemplo necati sunt*; "Though the Men deserv'd not to see the Light, yet the killing

T

274 *A Practical Discourse*

" ling of them was a most Evil
" Example. An Example that in
latter Ages hath been scandalously
followed by the Church of *Rome* ;
and 'tis the more to be Lamented,
because some furious Protestants
followed it too. The Burning of
Servetus at *Geneva* was a Fact,
which the best Men of the Refor-
mation would never go about to
Justifie : And the Author of the
History of the Council of *Trent*
tell us ; *It was to the Admiration of*
many, that the First Reformers did
shed Blood in the Cause of Religion.
The Truth is, such is the Spirit
and Genius of Right Christianity,
that it favours of nothing, but
what is Pure and Desirable ; such
as Meekness, Patience, Humility,
Goodness : And with these most
amiable Virtues ; Love, Charity,
Peaceableness, Moderation, Gentle-
ness,

ness, Mercy, and great Tenderness of Temper. Though *Charity* it self may sometimes hold out a Rod, to terrifie People from those Scandalous Disorders, which Kindness alone cannot many times put a stop to; yet to Vindicate even the true Faith with the cutting Arguments of Steel, or by the Torments of the Stake, is a Sign rather of a Barbarous, than a Religious and Christian Mind. Such Burning and Flaming Zeal as this, the gentle Spirit of Christ doth not kindle.

I have now ended the Consideration of those things, which I proposed at my Entrance upon this Discourse concerning *Charity*, and in the most Useful (because the most Practical) Part of it; I have, as near as I could, trod in

T 2 the

the Steps of St. *Paul* himself, who left us no less than Fifteen several Characters of *Charity*, as a particular Direction for us, how to express this most Necessary, Christian, and Comprehensive Virtue. It is one great Argument of the Truth of *Christianity*, that as its *Doctrines* are Reconcileable unto, so the *Duties* of it are Founded upon the best *Reason*; and are for the most part adapted to the Necessities and Interests of Humane Societies. This particular Duty of *Charity* is one, without which Societies cannot possibly subsist; not in that happy Condition, to be sure, which Christianity hath an Eye upon in the Duties it lays before us; if we were so wise, as to consider and see where our Real Good lieth, even in this World. The Motions whether

or

or Virtue, or Vice, carry a great Stroke with them; and affect not our selves only, but those also that are round about us. And when the Apostle delineated this Virtue, *Charity*, it was upon great Consideration, both of the Good Effects which attend it, and of those very Evil Consequences which follow the several Vices to which *Charity* stands in opposition, and they to it. Hence it was, that in shewing you the several ways of expressing your *Charity*, I was concerned of course, and necessity, to take some Notice of those Operations and Consequences, which Argue the great Reasonableness of your Practice as to this particular. And hence too it was, that in speaking of those Operations, I have used all possible Plainness for every ones Conviction;

ction; and this, in pursuance of St. Paul's great Design, to bring all our Hearts to a right Christian, and Charitable Temper; the Thing that is *above all Things*; the Thing that we must mind very diligently, if we expect ever to be saved.

We must not think to prescribe to our selves the Way to Salvation; but we must take the Conditions of it at the Hand of God, who alone hath a Right and Power to propose them; and who alone knoweth which is the best way for us. And Charity is the Way that he hath laid out before us in the Holy Scripture; The same Jesus Christ, that hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel; hath also revealed this as a Means of bringing us to that Life Immortal:

tal: So that we must take the whole *Revelation* as it is; and as well make the one part of it the Measure of our Practice, as we make the other the Ground of our Faith and Hopes; because the very same *Revelation* which gives us Authority to believe a future Blessed State, shews us likewise the Necessity of a Charitable Temper in order to it. There is one and the same Warrant for both; and for that reason we must believe both, or neither.

Indeed 'tis very Suspicious, that Uncharitable People believe very little of God, and a future State, (whatever they pretend) at least that they think not of these Things with that Seriousness and Intention of Mind, which is necessary to prepare them for the Practice of Charity: For such Divine

Thoughts could not but affect them, and work powerfully upon them, did they really believe, (what is most certainly true) that by wanting Charity, they must needs come short of Heaven.

Charity is as indispensably necessary as Faith, or as any other Act of Religion. And that we may apply our Hearts in good earnest to the Study and Exercise of it, let us at the close of this Subject consider briefly this one Thing only, besides those Motives which have been considered already; Namely, What an *Uncomfortable* Condition People of Uncharitable Spirits involve themselves in continually. How great soever their Health, or Strength, or Fortunes, or their other outward Enjoyments may be, they are the most miserable People in the World;

World; because all this while they are in an Unpardon'd State: They go about with all their Sins bound, and in danger of Eternal Damnation every moment; for God is their Enemy, and they his. The Words of our Saviour are plain, *Matth. 6. 15. If ye forgive not Men their Trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your Trespasses.* And to the same purpose saith the Disciple of his Bosom, *1 John 3. 14. He that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death.* Hence it follows, that the Ordinances of God, though they be the standing Means of Grace and Salvation, do such Uncharitable People no manner of Good, but Hurt rather; which is a great addition to their Misery. The Hearing of God's Word doth but increase their Guilt. The Sacraments of Christ's Body

Body and Blood are like Poison to their Souls ; and their very Prayers, which of all People they have most need to send up unto Heaven day and night, are so far from availing them, that *they are turned into Abomination*, Prov. 28.9. And what if Death should surprise such People unawares, such Accidents do commonly happen ; nor is any Man secure, but his Turn shall be the next, to drop into the Grave on a sudden. And what a desperate Condition doth he drop into , who falls thus unawares with his Conscience burdened with such a heavy Sin, and in a State of Enmity against the Laws of God, and against the Saviour of the World ? *It had been good for that Man, had he not been born*, Mat. 26. 23.

But

But 'tis more than probable, that Uncharitable Wretches seldom think of Dying, much less of dying a sudden Death; though Apoplexies, and unexpected Accidents happen every where, and are Daily Monitors to us all. Let them presume then, that some Lingering Disease will seize them at the last, and allow them some Time, to prepare for another Life. But what if they have not an Heart to Prepare themselves duly then, though they may have Time? 'Tis possible for Men to Sin away the Grace of God, and the Day of Salvation. 'Tis possible to harden the Heart so, as to render it Uncapable of Good Impressions. 'Tis possible also to provoke the Holy and Just God, to such an high degree, as that he will refuse to Soften and Intender it,

it, and to listen to their Cries, that would not call upon him while he was near. They are dreadful Threatnings, *Prov. i.* from Vers. 24. to Vers. 30. *Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded it. But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reprof. I also will laugh at your Calamity, and will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind ; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the Lord.* This I fear is the usual Result of Habitual Wickedness ; and especially of Men's living in a course

course and habit of Uncharitable-
ness ; because it is a Sin (or ra-
ther a Complication of Sins) so
Diametrically opposite to the
Laws of Jesus Christ, and to the
Spirit of his Religion, that of all
others now, it seemeth to come
the nearest to the very Sin against
the Holy Ghost.

But suppose such People should
at last express some Grief and Sor-
row for their Wicked Temper,
and for those manifold Injuries
and Mischiefs, which are the usual
Effects of Uncharitableness ; yet
who can tell, whether this Sor-
row proceedeth from the Love
of God, and from a true Sense
and Hatred of the Sin ; or whe-
ther it doth not come merely
from an Apprehension of those
Torments whereof their Consci-
ences are now afraid ? If it be
only

only the Fear of Punishment which extorteth those Expressions, this is very consistent with an Evil Mind ; that would act over the same Sins again, could they but renew their Lives. And therefore this Sorrow is no better than Nothing in God's Account ; because it is not such a *Godly Sorrow*, as worketh *Repentance unto Salvation* not to be repented of, 2 Cor. 7.10.

Let it be granted, Lastly, That the Sorrow is Genuine and Sincere, yet little Comfort can come by it to the Dying Person, because he hath no *Time* now to try, whether his Mind be changed indeed, and whether he be become a *New Man*, and a *New Creature*. So that at the best, his Case is very bad, because, though he be a True Penitent, yet it is more than he knows ; and consequently neither

ther can his Comfort be solid, nor can his Hopes of Pardon be built upon a sure Foundation.

In such a Labyrinth of Misery doth an Uncharitable Temper plunge every inconsiderate Wretch, though the Pleasure he takes, and the Profit he gets by Acts of Malice and Reyenge, doth not counter-vail the Thousandth Part of those Calamities and Dangers he exposeth himself to unavoidably.

Therefore it deeply concerns us all to be Wise in time, to mend in time, to Subdue and Rectifie our Dispositions in time, and to new-mould our Hearts into a Resemblance of that Holy and Excellent Being, who is a God of Compassion, the Father of Mercies; the Author of Peace, and the Lover of Concord. Men may fancy what they please; but

I take it for a certain Truth, that according as our Tempers are, either Good or Evil, so God loves or hates us ; and so our Portion will be at the last. If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, (that is, the Disposition and Temper of Christ) he is none of his, faith St. Paul, Rom. 8.9. And what was Christ's Spirit, but a Spirit of Love ? His Doctrines tended to Peace and Charity. His Miracles were Charitable ; he shewed his Power, as God doth, in doing Works of Pity and Compassion : He went about doing Good. And when his Hands and Feet were now Nailed to the Crofs, and hindred from doing any more, he employed his Tongue and Heart in a Work of the greatest Charity of all ; in sending up a Charitable Prayer for the Pardon of his Enemies.

Here

Here then is the Pattern that we must follow, if we expect any Benefit by his Crucifixion : As often as we *look on him, whom they pierced*, we must have an Eye upon his *Temper*, as well as upon his *Blood* ; and we must make the one our *Example*, as well as lay hold on the other for our *Peace*. Instead of *seeking* the Hurt, or *intending* the Hurt, or *wishing* the Hurt of any ; we must apply and set our Hearts as the Lord Jesus did, to do every one all the Good we can ; and then are we his indeed. To sum up all then in the *Words of St. Paul* ; *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice. Be ye Kind one to another, and Tender-hearted. Put on (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of*

290 A Practical Discourse

Mercy, Goodness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: If any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these Things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness. And let the Peace of God Rule in your Hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body. Amen.

O Lord, who hast taught us, That all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace, and of all Virtues; without which, whosoever liveth, is counted Dead before thee: Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

AL

Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the Increase of Faith, Hope, and Charity ; and that we may obtain that which thou dost Promise, make us to Love that which thou dost Command ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty Father, who hast Given thine only Son to Die for our Sins, and to Rise again for our Justification ; Grant us so to put away the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness, that we may alway serve Thee in Purenness of Living and Truth ; through the Merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine Elect, in one Communion and Fellowship in the

292 *A Practical Discourse.*

*Mystical Body of thy Son Jesus Christ
our Lord ; Grant us Grace so to fol-
low thy Blessed Saints in all Vir-
tuous and Godly Living, that we
may come to those Unspeakable Joys,
which thou hast Prepared for them
that Unfeignedly love Thee ; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

F I N I S.

